

Indian Muslim(s) After Liberalization

Maidul Islam

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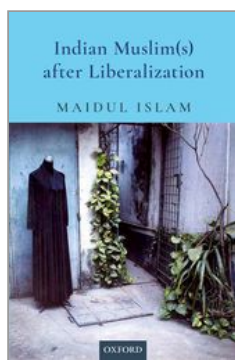
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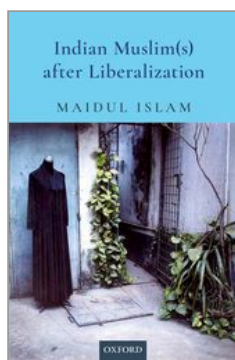
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(p.v) Dedication

Maidul Islam

*To JNU,
where this book began its journey (p.vi)*

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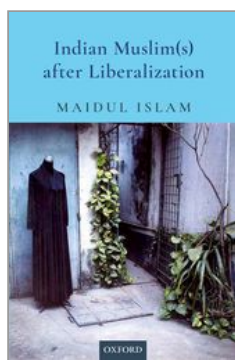
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(p.xi) Abbreviations

Maidul Islam

ACP

assistant commissioner of police

AIMIM

All India Majlis-e-Ittihadul-Muslimeen

AIMM

All India Muslim Majlis-e-Mushawarat

AIMPLB

All India Muslim Personal Law Board

AIUDF

All India United Democratic Front

AMA

Assessment and Monitoring Authority

ATS

Anti-Terrorist Squad

BJP

Bharatiya Janata Party

BJS

Bharatiya Jana Sangh

BPL

Below Poverty Line

BSF

Border Security Force

BSP

Bahujan Samaj Party

CBI

Central Bureau of Investigation

CISF

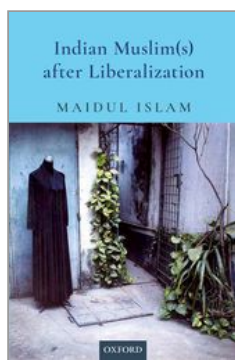
Central Industrial Security Force
CPI
Communist Party of India
CPP
Communist Party of the Philippines
CPS
Central Plan Scheme
CRPF
Central Reserve Police Force
CSDS
Centre for the Study of Developing Societies
CSS
Centrally Sponsored Scheme
DPCE
daily per capita consumption expenditure
EOC
Equal Opportunity Commission
FARC
Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia
FDI
foreign direct investment
(p.xii) GDP
gross domestic product
GST
goods and services tax
ICU
intensive care unit
IIAS
Indian Institute of Advanced Study
INC
Indian National Congress
ISI
Inter-Services Intelligence
IST
Indian Standard Time
ITI
Industrial Training Institute
IUML
Indian Union Muslim League
JNNURM
Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission
JNU
Jawaharlal Nehru University
KHAM

Kshatriyas, Harijans, Adivasis and Muslims
LETS
Local Exchange Trading System
LPG
liquid petroleum gas
LTTE
Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
MBCs
Most Backward Classes
MLA
member of legislative assembly
MP
member of Parliament
MPCE
monthly per capita consumption expenditure
NABARD
National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development
NAM
New Associationist Movement
NCM
National Commission for Minorities
NDA
National Democratic Alliance
NDB
National Data Bank
NES
National Election Study
NGO
non-governmental organization
NMDFC
National Minorities Development & Finance Corporation
NMML
Nehru Memorial Museum and Library
NREGA
National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
NRI
non-resident Indian
NSSO
National Sample Survey Office
OBC
Other Backward Classes
OECD
Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PFI

Popular Front of India
PIO
person of Indian origin
PM
prime minister
(p.xiii) PSU
public sector undertakings
RAW
Research and Analysis Wing
RBI
Reserve Bank of India
RSS
Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh
SC
Scheduled Caste
SDPI
Social Democratic Party of India
SEZ
special economic zone
SIDBI
Small Industries Development Bank of India
SIMI
Student's Islamic Movement of India
SIO
Students' Islamic Organisation
SMDFC
State Minorities Development & Finance Corporation
SP
superintendent of police
SRCs
socio-religious categories
SSB
Sashastra Seema Bal
ST
Scheduled Tribe
TADA
Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act
UGC
University Grants Commission
UK
United Kingdom
UP
Uttar Pradesh
UPA

United Progressive Alliance
USA
United States of America
VHP
Vishva Hindu Parishad
WPI
Welfare Party of India

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(p.xiv) Epigraph

Maidul Islam

We must emancipate ourselves before we can emancipate others.

—Karl Marx, 'On the Jewish Question'*

When the answer cannot be put into words, neither can the question be put into words. The *riddle* does not exist. If a question can be framed at all, it is also *possible* to answer it.

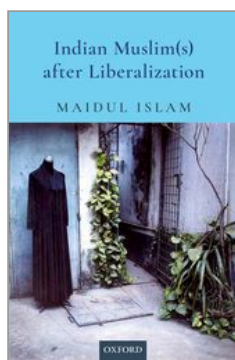
—Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*[†]

Notes:

(*) Karl Marx, 'On the Jewish Question', 1844, available at <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/jewish-question/index.htm>, accessed on 14 April 2018.

([†]) Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, translated by D.F. Pears and B.F. McGuinness, with an introduction by Bertrand Russell (London: Routledge, 2001 [1921]).

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This book is an effort to capture several issues regarding Indian Muslims in the context of the contemporary globalized world and what has been going on in the name of globalization in India—namely the gradual implementation of neoliberal economic policies of liberalization and privatization in the last three decades. I have greatly benefited at the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta (CSSSC), from thoughtful discussions with Partha Chatterjee, Saibal Kar, Pranab Kumar Das, Rajarshi Ghose, Karthick Ram Manoharan, Tapati Guha-Thakurta, and Manabi Majumdar, all of whom have made essential queries and suggestions. I would especially like to thank Partha Chatterjee for some very enriching discussions; his keen insights on Indian politics have helped me churn out some of my arguments in a much more nuanced manner.

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I realize that my interest in the question of identity and Indian politics was first formulated way back in 2006, albeit in a very nascent form, at a Young Scholars' conference funded by the University Grants Commission, New Delhi, and jointly organized by LeftWord Books and the Academy of Third World Studies, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi (now Maulana Mohammad Ali Jauhar Academy of International Studies). Here, I was greatly informed by the critical interventions of Amiya Kumar Bagchi, Sunalini Kumar, and Sudhanva Deshpande. It was my first academic conference, and I am grateful to the organizers of this event for inviting me to articulate my thoughts at a stage of my intellectual life when I knew and understood so little.

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One may say that I am trying to fill in the gaps in existing literature on the issues discussed in the book. If my interventions can provide **(p.xx)** some new perspectives in the contemporary academic discourses about a few pressing matters addressed in this book, then it would be more than enough reward for me. A few years back, in a lecture at Presidency University, Sudipta Kaviraj had articulated the sheer ignorance and insensitivity among many Bengali bhadralok towards Islam and Muslims, which he said was a matter of great shame. I could not agree more with his keen observations. The only addition to that statement is that it is not just a trend among significant sections of learned Bengalis but also among many members of the educated middle-class of several linguistic groups who must be sensitized about religious minorities. If nothing else, this book is a modest attempt to contribute to an issue that has generated a negative prejudice in the minds of many in an age where Islamophobia, communal prejudice, and contempt for progressive politics has become the dominant global fashion.

The theoretical elaboration on the thematic concerns in the book is the culmination of my engagement with research in the area of political theory and South Asian politics. My early association with progressive political activism during my student life has indeed nurtured me to concentrate on rigorous academic endeavour and to stand in solidarity with vulnerable groups with humility and with the awareness of my limitations.

Sections of the Prologue were presented as academic papers in a workshop at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (Tuljapur campus), India, in February 2013, the fellows' seminar at IIAS in May 2013, the political theory workshop at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, UK in June 2014, and a conference at the Oxford Department of International Development, University of Oxford, UK, in May 2015. Sections of Chapter 1 had appeared in the Working Paper Series I, vol. 1, no. 2 of the then Programme for the Study of Discrimination and Exclusion, JNU; *Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, no. 6 (September 2009); *Social Scientist*, vol. 40, nos 7–8 (July–August 2012); *Social Action*, vol. 57, no. 3 (July–September 2007); and in *Democratic Governance and Politics of the Left in South Asia* edited by Subhoranjan Dasgupta (New Delhi: Aakar Books, 2015). Chapter 2 is a modified and enlarged

version of a paper that appeared in the *Indian Journal of Human Development*, vol. 1, no. 2 (July–December, 2007). Chapter 3 is a modified version of a paper that was published in *Social Action*, vol. 57, no. 3 (July–September 2007). Sections of Chapter 4 had **(p.xxi)** appeared in *People's Democracy*, vol. 31, no. 1 (January 7, 2007), UGC-DRS Occasional Paper Series of the Department of Political Science of the University of Calcutta in 2015, *St. Antony's International Review*, vol. 12, no. 2 (2017), and *WION* (25 August 2017). Sections of the Epilogue had appeared in *Democratic Governance and Politics of the Left in South Asia*, and was presented as a conference paper in the Asiatic Society, Kolkata, in August 2016.

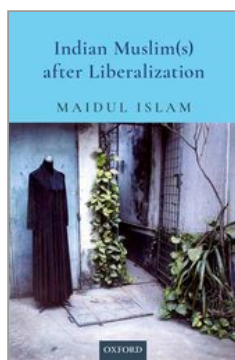
All chapters have been substantively rewritten, updated, and rearranged to transform the earlier fragments of thoughts into a detailed monograph in the light of new empirical evidence of both quantitative and qualitative nature.

I thank the entire team of Oxford University Press, India, which with its strong professional expertise helped publish the book. Any shortcomings or errors in this work are entirely mine.

Maidul Islam

Kolkata, October 2018 **(p.xxii)**

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Prologue

Muslim Identity Formation in Neoliberal India

Maidul Islam

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Abstract and Keywords

The Prologue contextualises the socio-economic conditions of Muslim minorities in contemporary India. It points out severe income inequality as the most significant feature of contemporary India, which is governed by the logic of neoliberal economic policies. This chapter reviews the political, policymaking, and academic discourses in the socio-political and economic contexts of neoliberal reforms in India. It introduces the questions that the book addresses in the later chapters. This introductory chapter also narrates the theoretical framework, the conceptual clarifications regarding the specificity of the *Indian Muslim identity*, the particular characteristics of the Indian version of neoliberalism, and the peculiarities of the political and policy regimes that sustain Indian neoliberalism and spells out the chapter plan in the book.

Keywords: neoliberalism, Muslim minorities, income inequality, Indian Muslim identity, reforms

The usual justification for the 'no alternative dogma' is globalisation, and the argument generally rehearsed against redistributive social-democratic policies is that the tight fiscal constraints faced by governments are the only realistic possibility in a world where global markets would not permit any deviation from neo-liberal orthodoxy. This argument takes for granted the ideological terrain which has been created as a result of years of neo-liberal hegemony, and transforms what is a conjunctural state of affairs into a historical necessity. Presented as driven exclusively by the information revolution, the forces of globalisation are detached from their

political dimensions and appear as a fate to which we all have to submit. So we are told that there are no more left-wing or right-wing economic policies, only good and bad ones! To think in terms of hegemonic relations is to break with such fallacies. Indeed, scrutinizing the so-called 'globalized world' through the category of hegemony...can help us to understand that the present conjuncture, far from being the only natural or possible societal order, is the expression of a certain configuration of power relations. It is the result of hegemonic moves on the part of specific social forces which have been able to implement a profound transformation in the relations between capitalist corporations and the nation-states. This hegemony can be challenged.

—Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe*

(p.2) India has experienced over two and a half decades of formal and institutionalized economic reforms within the political-economic structure of the neoliberal regime. Neoliberalism in the contemporary Indian scene emerged along with specific policies of privatization of the public sector; this opened up the economy through the liberalization of trade and the policies of globalization by connecting the Indian economy with global circuits of capital. In this context, this book will unravel the specific socio-economic and political problems of the Muslim minorities in India along with the nuances of Muslim identity formation against the backdrop of the triad of liberalization, privatization, and globalization.¹ This book tries to venture forth a theoretical possibility of linking economic issues and community identity concerning Indian Muslims. First, the book asks a couple of questions: Can the Muslim identity in India also be seen from the perspective of the socio-economically deprived and politically marginalized group identity? Second, if one can argue a case for an overlap of Muslim identity with a *status* of being one of India's poorest sections, or if Indian Muslims can be empirically identified as a deprived socio-economic group, then why have the issues of socio-economic deprivation of Indian Muslims not been prominently articulated in the contemporary political discourses? In search for the answers to the above two fundamental questions, I ask a few secondary questions. How are Muslims in India faring in the successive neoliberal **(p.3)** regimes? How have the academic discourses so far dealt with the problems of Indian Muslims? How are Indian Muslims represented in the forms of dominant cultural production such as mainstream Hindi cinema? What is the underlying political logic of governmental policies such as affirmative action towards excluded groups, including Indian Muslims? How does the universal Islamic world view of a section of the Muslim population in India convince the community to *identify* with the *ummah* (global community of Muslim believers) instead of asserting the class and citizenship identities as prime identifying markers of Indian Muslims? Can we think about a positive future of a particular group such as Indian Muslims, converging with a more comprehensive

universalist counter-hegemonic project of radical democratic politics, and the emergence of the people as the collective actor in transcending neoliberalism?

In my previous book I theorized on the political articulations of a section of Muslims who do not make a fundamental difference between the political ideology of Islamism and the religion of Islam.² In this book, I am largely concerned with the Muslim question in India. In doing so, I point out the similarities and differences of those processes that construct and shape the Muslim identity in the context of the neoliberal regime in India. Simply put, in this book, I focus on socio-economic conditions and citizenship identity, which might help us to think about Indian Muslims in relatively homogenous terms without ignoring the heterogeneity of the community on some other parameters such as caste, linguistic, and theological differences.

Consistent with the analytical framework in my last book, in this study too I differentiate between three distinct categories: (a) Muslim or Muslim identity; (b) Islamic or Islamic identity; and (c) Islamist or Islamist identity. I argue that the term 'Muslim' is a broad general category that encapsulates both religious and non-religious people among the believers of the Islamic religion. In other words, those who do not practise Islamic religion in their everyday life but have *faith* in Islamic religion can be Muslims or *identify* themselves as being Muslim. Thus, the term 'Muslim' in this study is used to represent the *collective* of those people who have *faith* in Islamic religion but do not view Islam as a **(p.4)** complete way of life or initiate political struggles to establish an Islamic political order. People belonging to the second category of 'Islamic' are those who *practise* Islamic religion in their everyday lives and might also believe that Islam is a *way of life* but do not have a political agenda to establish a Sharia-based Islamic state. However, 'Islamists' are those who not only believe that Islam is a way of life but also claim that it is a *complete* way of life and that it is an ideal holistic religion with a political agenda of building a Sharia-centric Islamic state. Therefore, the general formula according to my categorization is that all Muslims are not necessarily Islamic or Islamists, whereas all Islamic people are Muslims but not necessarily Islamists, and all Islamists are indeed both Muslims and Islamic.³

The differentiation of various terms such as 'Muslim', 'Islamic', and 'Islamist' also has a scholarly justification. As Marshall Hodgson, a noted scholar of Islamic civilization, points out, merely having faith in Islam does not necessarily mean that the culture of Muslims is always Islamic. It is because 'much of what even Muslims have done as a part of the "Islamic" civilization can only be characterised as "un-Islamic" in the religious sense of the word'.⁴ Recently, a conceptually robust analytical framework of differentiating between Islam as a theoretical object and Islam as a real historical phenomenon that is practised in the theological form is magnificently dealt with by Shahab Ahmed.⁵ In the context of India, where Muslims form the most substantial religious minority,

often these nuanced differences between the Muslim, the Islamic, and the Islamist are not made. Instead there is a tendency to club all of them together as a homogenous entity. In recent years, this has been happening for the socio-political category of the Hindus as well, because there is a concerted effort by the repeated performative acts of Hindutva groups to produce a discursive terrain to equate Hinduism and Hindutva continuously. Hinduism is an organised and polytheistic religion while Hindutva is a political ideology that attempts **(p. 5)** to mobilize Hindus against primarily Muslims and Christians by further politicizing the private sphere of faith and belief in various gods and goddesses, and Hindu ritualistic practices. Such discursive practices of the propagandists of Hindutva mask the vast differences between the religion of Hinduism, which promotes a plurality of traditions, and the political ideology of Hindutva, which presents a homogenized and one-dimensional doctrine. Later in this chapter, I have elaborately discussed the discourses of Hindutva.

In this book, the words *Indian Muslim(s)* are used to keep the options open for the reader to read as 'Indian Muslims' (in the plural form), representing a collective of a heterogeneous community due to intra-group differences within the Muslim community of India along the lines of caste, language, and theology. At the same time, one may read it as 'Indian Muslim' (in the singular form) as a social category and a distinct political identity such as 'Dalit'. Moreover, *Indian Muslim* also expresses the idea of *singularity* that has a metaphorical meaning of a lonely, isolated, and alienated Muslim subject in India with his/her socio-economic and political marginalization in a situation where limited solidarity and support exist. In essence, the book tries to be anchored around what scholars point out as conceptual and political contestations between *citizens* and *people* on the one hand and between the dynamics of hegemonic majoritarianism and the consequences of the minority marginalization on the other hand.⁶ With respect to this, the present book will try to unravel the quest of the Indian Muslim(s) for democratic rights as citizens in the backdrop of Muslim marginalization in an era of neoliberalism and at a time when the discursive practices of the ideology of Hindutva as the political form of majoritarianism denigrates Muslims as unruly people rather than proper citizens of the **(p.6)** Indian nation-state. Since this book deals with the Muslim question under the conditions of neoliberalism, let me clarify how neoliberalism operates within the context of the Indian nation-state.

Neoliberalism with Indian Characteristics

By neoliberalism I mean the contemporary context of neoliberal consensus with the institutionalized policies of liberalization, privatization, and globalization that we are experiencing both at the national and international levels.⁷ Today, neoliberalism is not exclusively marked by the retreat of the state as was initially posited in the philosophical treatises of Hayek⁸ and Friedman.⁹ While the centralized planning of the erstwhile Soviet Union and East Europe and the bureaucratic forms that accompanied capitalist societies in the West have both

been discredited in the twentieth century, the conservative and free market ideological proposal for a deregulated market is also problematic. As Laclau argues, 'the automatism of market mechanisms is largely a myth—indeed, state intervention in the regulation of the economy has been greater under neo-conservative regimes than during the period of the welfare state'.¹⁰ Although neoliberalism in India is elite-driven, it has become a consensual practice that enjoys hegemony within the national policy framework. I would argue that if we carefully follow the Indian experience over the last three decades, we will find that Indian neoliberalism is broadly the *mimicry* of the Euro-American model of neoliberalism, although one could make a nuanced conceptual separation between the **(p.7)** European and Anglo-American versions of neoliberalism, particularly after the election of Donald Trump in the USA and the Brexit vote in the UK. Since 2017, the new tendency of the Anglo-American governments has been to implement the policy of tax cuts for the rich in the name of tax reforms. In effect, one could differentiate between the high taxation and public goods and manufacturing base model of European neoliberalism and the model of low taxation and emphasis on the service sector and financial sector in Anglo-American neoliberalism.

As distortion is inevitably related to mimicking, the model of Indian neoliberalism, mimicking the Anglo-American form of neoliberalism, has its own specific characteristics. In other words, there are some essential differences between Anglo-American neoliberalism and what could be called neoliberalism with Indian characteristics. In the ongoing phase of liberalization in India, there are two crucial characteristics of India's big capital when compared with big capital in the Anglo-American form of neoliberalism. First, India's big capital has been largely 'riskless' and has benefited and been appeased by the strong backing of the state and public sector banks.¹¹ Second, the source of income of significant sections of India's big capital comes from extractive sectors such as land, real estate, oil and gas, mining, and so on (mainly the commodities market, which trades in the primary economic sector, rather than manufactured products). Thus, India's big capital is relatively more extractive and less innovative with earnings from 'rent-thick' sectors (real estate, construction, infrastructure or ports sectors, media, cement, and mining) than the more innovative capital in the Anglo-American form of neoliberalism. By one estimate, in 2012, overall 43 per cent of the total number of billionaires, accounting for 60 per cent of billionaire wealth in India, had rent-thick sectors as their primary sources of wealth.¹²

The India Rich List 2017 by Forbes India with the top 100 wealthiest persons in India shows that the incomes of Indian billionaires from the rent-thick sectors have increased exponentially. In contrast, the **(p.8)** Anglo-American capital has made money by selling information as the new global commodity. The top big corporate giants in the Global 2000 Forbes list—Microsoft, Google, Apple, Amazon, Dell, Facebook, and others along with several other digital tycoons—

have been far more innovative in their approach than the lobbying of India's big capital for traditional means of production such as land and habitat. The extractive nature of big capital during the phase of liberalization in India has thus created more significant dislocation of the marginalized and socio-economically deprived groups, although both in the Anglo-American and Indian contexts, sharp inequalities have been characteristic features during the phase of neoliberalism. In fact, Lucas Chancel and Thomas Piketty have demonstrated that during 1980–2014, roughly the more significant period of liberalization in India, the growth of the pre-tax income of the top 0.001 per cent of adult Indians far exceeded that of China, the United States, and France.¹³ While both China and India saw the exponential growth of pre-tax incomes of adults in each income group in the bottom 50 per cent, middle 40 per cent, and top 10 per cent, the real beneficiaries of the period of liberalization in terms of income growth have been the super-rich top 1 per cent in India (see Table P.1).

Table P.1 Total Income Growth Rates by Percentile in India, 1980-2014

| Income Group (distribution of per adult pre-tax national income) | Total cumulated per adult real growth (1980-2014) | | | | |
|--|---|--------|--------|------|------|
| | India | China | France | USA | |
| Total Population | | 187% | 659% | 35% | 62% |
| Bottom 50% | | 89% | 312% | 25% | 4% |
| Middle 40% | | 93% | 615% | 32% | 45% |
| Top 10% | | 394% | 1,074% | 47% | 119% |
| including Top 1% | | 750% | 1,534% | 88% | 198% |
| including Top 0.1% | | 1,138% | 1,825% | 161% | 306% |
| including Top 0.01% | | 1,834% | 2,210% | 223% | 437% |
| including Top 0.001% | | 2,726% | 2,546% | 261% | 621% |

Source: Lucas Chancel and Thomas Piketty, 'Indian Income Inequality, 1922-2014: From British Raj to Billionaire Raj?', WID World Working Paper Series, Number 2017/11 (July 2017), p. 24.

Abhijit Banerjee and Thomas Piketty have demonstrated how the gradual liberalization of the Indian economy made it possible for only the top 1 per cent to substantially increase their share of total income. However, there is a difference even within the top 1 per cent of earners if one compares the economic growth trajectories in the 1980s and 1990s. In the 1980s, the gains in wealth were shared by everyone in the top percentile; by 1990s, only those at the very high 0.1 per cent had big gains over others.¹⁴ In the latest Oxfam survey of 2017 too, it is evident that the richest 1 per cent have amassed 73 per cent of total wealth in India. In contrast, wealth increased by only 1 per cent **(p. 9)** among the 670 million Indians who belong to the poorest category of the country's population. The Oxfam survey also maintains that in the last one year, the wealth of the elite group of top 1 per cent most affluent Indians has increased by INR 20,913 billion (20.9 lakh crore during 2017), equivalent to the total budget of the central government of India in 2017–18.¹⁵ The survey showed that in the last one year, 17 new individuals have joined the billionaires' club in India taking the total number of Indian billionaires to 101. The wealth increase of Indian billionaires is sufficient to finance 85 per cent of health and education budgets of all states.¹⁶ Of the respondents to the Oxfam survey, 73 per cent think that the gap between the rich and the poor needs to be addressed urgently or very urgently and there is strong support for increasing the tax rate for the top 1 per cent of income **(p.10)** earners.¹⁷ Data from Credit Suisse¹⁸ reveals that in 2017, among the top wealthy groups, only 4.03 million adults had wealth over USD 100,000 and 245,000 adults had wealth over USD 1 million.¹⁹ Moreover, the data revealed that the mortality rate of those Indians living on USD 2 a day is three times the global average.²⁰

In such a situation of uncouth inequality, how is Indian neoliberalism sustaining itself? More specifically, under conditions of such extreme form of income inequality, how does the system remain unchallenged? Both Kalyan Sanyal and Partha Chatterjee have answered this by pointing out how the policies and politics of economic transformation under conditions of globalization and the development discourse negotiate with the compulsions of electoral democracy by offering various forms of doles to manage the relative losers of economic growth in India.²¹ This broader structure of neoliberal economic policies that benefits the super-rich while earning the consent of the people for not challenging the system has primarily been sustained even after the 2014 Lok Sabha elections. The two significant economic moves of the current political establishment, namely demonetization and the implementation of the goods and services tax (GST) have not affected the incomes of the super-rich business tycoons of India. In fact, the Forbes 2017 estimate suggests that the combined fortunes of the richest 100 Indians rose by 26 per cent to USD 479 billion.²² Piketty and Qian have demonstrated how there has been sharp inequality of income in India and China from **(p.11)** 1986 and that there is a need to implement tax reforms in the form of a policy of progressive taxation.²³ In 2008,

the percentage of the population that pays income tax was only a little over 2 per cent in India while in China it was 20 per cent, despite the fact that both countries were at par in this respect around the early 1990s.²⁴ Moreover, the fall of revenues from income tax as a fraction of gross domestic product (GDP) in India vis-à-vis China has been a constant feature from 1998 to 2008.²⁵ In such a scenario, adequate funds for public education, public health care, and public infrastructure cannot be mobilized unless the super-rich in India pays more taxes. Instead of implementing this, the neoliberal establishment in India has continuously provided various forms of tax sops and tax havens for the super-rich.

Both the policies of demonetization and implementation of GST aim to widen the tax base and enhance the formal sector, although, in the case of demonetization, the original justification was that it was a way of curbing fake currency, unaccounted wealth, smuggling, and terrorism.²⁶ A very recent example of the political compulsion of negotiating **(p.12)** with neoliberalism is the farm loan waiver given by several states despite the opposition to such a move by the central finance minister and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) governor.²⁷ Several dole-centric policies of the present political establishment are a continuation, repackaging, and expansion of schemes initially introduced by the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government during 2004–14. However, one cannot argue that the farm loan waiver demands are similar to the kind of pressure that the agricultural lobby put on the state governments in the pre-liberalization period. The present situation is different from the 1970s and 1980s when the political clout of the landed elites in the countryside was relatively more considerable than from the 1990s onwards.²⁸ The post-liberalization period has witnessed a massive agrarian crisis on the one hand and the diminished political strength of the landed castes on the other hand. In fact, there are new demands for reservation by the landed and intermediate castes, which means that these castes are opting out of agriculture, which is gradually becoming economically unviable. The political establishment can afford to **(p.13)** hand out such massive doles because of the revenue generated from the expansion of the export sector from the 1990s, and more importantly in the new millennium, when the share of Indian exports compared to other Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)²⁹ countries has risen significantly. The Indian corporate sector benefited from the global boom, and even after the 2008 crisis, it did well because of the consistent backing of both state- and the public-sector banks. In addition, under the current government headed by Narendra Modi (which arguably practises a modified version of Hindutva often referred to as Moditva),³⁰ the neoliberal establishment has taken to managing the ever-increasing Indian population through the strategy of giving out doles. However, the government does not only limit itself to that: anger is brewing among large sections of the population which are losing out on the benefits of economic reforms, and this anger is strategically dealt with by deflecting popular attention

from being focused on the opposition to the neoliberal system to a systematic and targeted violence against marginalized groups in the form of mob lynching and a series of low-scale communal riots.³¹ In other words, the democratic demands of the population are not being channelized against the neoliberal power bloc in the form of right to education, health care, and employment but are being diverted so that they are adversely manifested against hapless lower castes and religious **(p.14)** minorities in the form of organized and prejudiced campaigns against those groups. It is in such a context of liberalization that this book poses the question of Muslim identity formation.

The Process of Muslim Identity Formation in India: Philosophical Issues and Sociopolitical Context

Before delving into the philosophical and political concept of Muslim *identity*, let me clarify at the beginning that identity is a vital component of political mobilization. It is through an identity that political mobilization takes place and democratic demands are articulated. It is by foregrounding identity that specific claims are put forward in front of the power bloc. In this respect, identity becomes the tool of both representation and resistance. Similarly, one can also locate specific identities as 'marginalized'. Therefore, the triad of marginalization, representation, and resistance is fundamentally connected to the issue of *identity*. However, representation can also be seen as the logic of the authority, where specific political articulations and democratic demands can be absorbed and accommodated by the power bloc to stifle any possibility of successful resistance. Where any mechanism of accommodating democratic demands fails, the possibility of a successful resistance looms large. Nonetheless, political mobilization for either representation or resistance is based on identities by articulating the plight of marginalized ones. The mobilization of marginalized identity groups is albeit made against an oppressive power bloc, whose existence creates the conditions for the possibility of resistance.

The Oxford English Dictionary gives three definitions of 'identity': (a) 'the fact of being who or what a person or thing is'; (b) 'the characteristics determining who or what a person or thing is' while 'distinguishing them from others'; and (c) 'close similarity with or feeling of understanding'. Here, one can certainly speak about two fundamental forms of identity. One is an objective aspect while the other is a subjective aspect of identity. As Akeel Bilgrami points out, 'Your subjective identity is what you conceive yourself to be, whereas your objective identity is how you might be viewed independently of how you see yourself. In other words, your objective identity is who **(p.15)** you are in light of certain biological or social facts about you.'³² At the same time, Bilgrami clarifies that the 'biological criteria are not the only criteria invoked in objective identity. Intersubjective and social criteria are also much favoured. For example, Marxists often claim that one's identity is given by one's role in a particular

economic formation in a given period of history—that is, one’s class identity, as “class” is defined by Marx’.³³

Since *identity* is a sociopolitical construct, it can be built by the marginalized group as well as the power bloc. In this respect, one can argue that construction of an identity is the result of the *presence* or *absence* of a particular kind of political articulation. For example, in popular political discourses, Muslims are seen more as a religious minority community than an economically deprived group. Although the Indian Constitution has given specific rights to religious and linguistic minorities, it does not explicitly define the term ‘minority’ and somewhat depends on the interpretative discourses of judicial pronouncements for defining ‘who is a minority’.³⁴ In the nineteenth century, attempting to define the Muslim identity based on the tussle between Wahabism and Sufi mysticism was the dominant discourse. Determining Muslim identity was also articulated through the discourses of pan-Islamism, Muslim nationalism, Muslim rights, and composite nationalism in the first half of the twentieth century, followed by locating the Muslim identity within the liberal idea of ‘group rights’ in the second half of the twentieth century.³⁵ In this respect, the problem of approaching the Muslim identity on the basis of socio-economic conditions is related **(p.16)** to *identity construction* and *identification* as a process of creating the identity of a community. Both ‘identity’ and ‘identity formation’ are important political concepts without which any politics is impossible. As we have learnt from Bilgrami, each class has an identity, that which we call ‘class identity’, which determines whether a person belongs to the working class, peasantry, the capitalist or the feudal class, or others. But the process of *identification* of that particular person whether one is Dalit, Adivasi, Muslim, worker, peasant, capitalist, feudal, Punjabi, Bengali, Tamil, or so on depends both on the outside agency (how others identify a particular person) and the inside agency (how a person is identifying, asserting, and emphasizing upon one’s own identity or how the person wants to be identified). I shall discuss such issues of the construction of the Indian Muslim identity in the next chapter.

Any contemporary scholarship that has dealt with Islam and Muslims in India has mainly located those in relation with modernity. In this respect, there can be two projects: one is a philosophical and historical search for the Muslim roots of modernity—Muslims as the link between the so-called ancient glory and modern enlightenment; and the other project can be related to the kinds of Muslim responses to modernization. The process of modernization is fundamentally different from the approach of modernity. The latter encompasses the universal values of freedom and equality while the former is an ensemble of socio-economic, infrastructural, scientific, and technological progress. In this context, it is important to note how Indian Muslims in particular have responded to the modernist projects of the colonialists and the post-colonial Indian nation-state. In contrast to such a historical inquiry, this book will ask the following questions in the context of contemporary India: How are Indian Muslims responding with

respect to the modern projects of globalization and liberalization? Furthermore, have Indian Muslims welcomed or accepted such processes? Have they rejected globalization by looking inward, becoming introverted, and by justifying Islamic conservatism and orthodoxy? Are they caught in a dilemma between accepting and rejecting the modern projects of globalization and liberalization? One of the major issue of studying Indian Muslims can be how the community is *negotiating* with globalized modernization and liberalized modernity. Also, could there be a link between accepting or rejecting modernity and its impact on the socio-economic development of the Muslim community **(p.17)** in India? Does the socio-economic development of specific Muslim groups characterized by different regional and caste backgrounds or following distinct schools of Islamic jurisprudence have an impact on their behavioural pattern in responding to globalized modernization and liberalized modernity. The viability of the logical answers to these questions may be tested by making a possible connection between the parameters characterizing the socio-economic situation of Indian Muslims and the levels of industrial and technological modernization in various parts of the country. We have to ask such questions as why are the educational, health, income, and poverty indicators of Muslims in the south and west of the country higher than that of the Muslims in northern and eastern India. Is it something to do with the very different kinds of responses to modernization or the very different lived experiences of Muslims in the various regions of India—due to the varied nature of socio-economic development in north, east, west, and south India—that makes the Muslim community in southern and western parts of the nation react to liberalized modernity very differently?

Indian Muslims are very different from the Bangladeshi and Pakistani Muslims precisely because of their minority character. In this context, the Sachar Committee Report takes note of the fact that ‘Muslims carry a double burden of being labelled as “anti-national” and as being “appeased” at the same time’.³⁶ The Sachar Committee Report completely shatters the myth of Muslim appeasement with a staggering amount of information and data that shows a dismal picture of the actual living conditions of India’s largest minority. In this regard, Sachar Committee Report revealed the following:

While there is considerable variation in the conditions of Muslims across states (and among the Muslims, those who identified themselves as OBCs [Other Backward Classes] and others), the Community exhibits deficits and deprivation in practically all dimensions of development. In fact, by and large, Muslims rank somewhat above SCs/STs [Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes] but below Hindu OBCs, Other Minorities and Hindu General (mostly upper castes) in almost all indicators considered. Among the states that have large Muslim populations, the situation is particularly grave in the states of West Bengal, Bihar, Uttar **(p.18)** Pradesh, and Assam. Interestingly, despite such deficits, the Community has lower infant mortality rates and sex-ratios. In addition to the ‘development deficit’, the

perception among Muslims that they are discriminated against and excluded is widespread, which exacerbates the problem. The Committee strongly suggests that the policies to deal with the relative deprivation of the Muslims in the country should sharply focus on inclusive development and 'mainstreaming' of the Community while respecting diversity.³⁷

Based on the very comprehensive and systematic report of the Sachar Committee, which portrays a dismal socio-economic and educational backwardness of Indian Muslims, the significant questions can be: Has the modern Indian nation-state failed to handle the issues of difference, pluralism, diversity, discrimination, and exclusion as far as the Muslim minorities are concerned? Or is there a strong need for introspection on the part of the Indian Muslims themselves in addressing the backwardness of the community? Apart from positive governmental initiatives, an introspective approach on the part of the Muslim community is also the need of the hour, particularly with respect to the community's educational attainments. Thus, blaming only governmental institutions and administrative structures for the overall backwardness of the community would not help the purpose of Indian Muslims to move forward from their present situation. There is no denying the fact that the government has to take responsibility for the uplift of the community. But it should also be admitted that the Muslim community has to also take initiatives for its own development. The change has to take place from within the community itself. This *change* should be a significant modification in the mindset and orientation of sections of the minority community which will help it to come out of its conservatism, orthodoxy, and factional divisions on petty grounds. In this respect, both the secular Muslim leadership and the *ulama*³⁸ have to take a positive approach of initiating more dialogue among them to come up with possible mechanisms to ameliorate the problems of the community. The secular Muslim leadership should take a more active role in articulating the democratic demands of education, health, and **(p.19)** employment while forming a bridge between themselves and the Muslim masses. At the same time, the *ulama* has to think more about new ways of reinterpreting the Islamic texts by following the Islamic provision of *ijtihad*³⁹ in the light of modern-day circumstances. This particular form of community consciousness among Muslims is vital for the eradication of the community's backwardness with the help of modern education.⁴⁰

In matters of the culture of Indian Muslims, the common traditionalist argument is that 'the preservation of cultural property and the strengthening of traditional values is a direct way of re-enforcing the insulating layer of the Muslim life'.⁴¹ The systematic economic exploitation of colonialism had left its mark on Muslim communities, right from rural to the urban Muslim lives. However, a repetition of colonial misery among Muslims is now being witnessed under the aegis of new structures and processes of globalization. Today, the global capitalist regime with its ideology of neoliberalism, has pushed the Muslim community to a state of helplessness—a sense that is already prevalent in a fragmented social

structure, biased economic systems, elitist political institutions, and oppressive bureaucratic administrations. Indian Muslims, in this regard, are also the victims of neoliberalism. The contemporary strategies of a peculiar mode of modernization and development have added humiliation to injury for the Muslims in India. A considerable section of Indian Muslims is socio-economically backward. Only a small minority among the Indian Muslims has access to power and resources. Such an elitist minority adopts a system of values that supports and perpetuates the existing social, economic, and political contradictions. These in a way alienates the small creamy layer **(p.20)** of Muslim elites from the majority of the poor Muslims to a point where the Muslim masses cannot identify with the Muslim elites.

The ultimate object of community development is to liberate the rural and urban poor from their state of dependency. Some argue that culture provides the only stable conceptual framework within which community development of Muslims can take place.⁴² In Muslim societies, culture is mostly associated with religion, and they have a complementary relationship. Islamic religion shapes 'Muslim culture' whereas one may find certain cultural symbols shaping religious practices as well. Therefore, the Muslim identity is generally constructed around strong, distinctive characteristics of a religious community. In effect, it also creates another domain of ethnic culture, and this duality of both ethnicity and religion shapes the cultural identity of the Muslims. But in this regard the multiculturalist call 'we should attempt to give culture space to protect itself and represent its distinctive perspective in the public arena'⁴³ seems to be an idealized one, which remains unachieved given the current assertion of cultural homogenization by the forces of Hindutva and market-led consumerism. In such a context, one also has to remember what Dipankar Gupta says:

It is true that minority cultures should not be discriminated against, but it is also true that there should be agreed rules of public conduct. It is important to provide for legal safeguards that make it difficult to discriminate against minorities, but this should not be extended to separate off the minorities from the rest. Policies towards minorities have to emerge from an overall acquiescence to the principles of citizenship. It should not pit minorities against minorities. This would only create a perennial divide and become an inspirational source of myriad political conspiracies.⁴⁴

In the backdrop of the above-mentioned social situation, let me highlight the contemporary political structure within which Indian Muslims are located. Let me first briefly situate Muslim marginalization in the context of the hegemony of Hindutva in Gujarat. **(p.21)** Before 2002, the state of Gujarat 'had been a laboratory of Hindutva experiment for the last couple of decades'⁴⁵ and the sense of isolation backed up by the physical threat to survival among Muslims in Gujarat had its effects in other parts of the country too. The case of Gujarat tells

us how the 'will to hate' has become the nomenclature of the politics practised in one of India's most industrially advanced states, which indicates that this form of politics is not necessarily a primordial mode of distinction between citizens but can be modern as well.⁴⁶

There is no dearth of literature that investigates what really happened in Gujarat during the horrific riots that took place in early 2002. Available literature analyses the ideology that led to the Gujarat carnage and tries to find the possible causes of the genocide; it also probes the pathology of the state administration while describing the role of the state apparatus, the vernacular media, the new agents of communal violence such as Dalit, Adivasi, and middle-class participation, and the reason behind the immense victimization of women—all of which made the incidents of February 2002 in Gujarat a watershed in the history of communal violence in modern India.⁴⁷ Thus, I will not repeat **(p.22)** them. However, most understandings of the political affairs in Gujarat have often been reduced to moral condemnations rather than rational explanations of the following more fundamental questions: How did Gujarat become a state of consensus for the Hindutva political project? How did the construction of Hindutva become possible by singling out and identifying the Muslim minorities as 'the enemy within the state' while a strategy was formulated for politically mobilizing various marginalized and plebeian sectors of the population, namely Dalits and Adivasis? Thus, we will try to understand how the hegemony of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS)-backed Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) was built through the mobilization strategy of communal fascism. Although the short-term electoral success of the Gujarat model in the 2002 assembly elections reflects the success of a mobilization strategy that is communal in nature, its limits can be witnessed in the failure of this kind of electoral experiment in the 2004 Lok Sabha elections. Later, a series of assembly and parliamentary elections in Gujarat from 2007 onwards show an almost total Hindutva consensus without a communal-fascist mobilization strategy similar to what was witnessed in 2002. Therefore, a communal political agenda alone cannot be an adequate explanation for the comprehensive success of Hindutva in Gujarat, and that is why I shall take recourse to the analytical concept of hegemony while pointing out briefly the conditions for the possibility of a communal-fascist consensus in a state such as Gujarat.⁴⁸

The Hindutva hegemony in Gujarat with almost a consensus rule of the RSS-backed BJP reflected in successive electoral wins in the state in both versions of assembly and parliamentary elections in the last two decades is a result of two parallel and simultaneous factors: First was the inability of the Congress as a liberal right-wing party to win the people or in other words to dismantle the hegemony of the BJP by fracturing its mass base across various sections of the population including the **(p.23)** backward castes, Dalits, and Adivasis. This is because rather than mounting a political struggle against Hindutva—which is essentially elitist-Brahmanic and ideologically far-right in nature, and in this

sense, antagonistic to the interests of the plebeian population of backward castes, Dalits, and Adivasis—the Congress itself was engaged in championing a ‘soft Hindutva’ political line as it was already assured of the Muslim votes in the state. It is surprising that the Congress itself had been successful in forming a social alliance of KHAM (Kshatriyas, Harijans, Adivasis, and Muslims) along with Kolis in the coastal areas against the dominant Bania, Brahmin, and Patel hegemony in the 1980s,⁴⁹ which was later broken by the BJP in the 1990s. Second was the absence of a viable, credible, and organized left-wing political movement among the people of the state and the lack in Gujarat of an available working-class political discourse as a contesting force represented by the ideological practice of the left. As Laclau observes:

Fascism arose from a dual crisis: (1) a crisis of the power bloc which was unable to absorb and neutralize its contradictions with the popular sectors through traditional channels; (2) a crisis of the working class, which was unable to hegemonize popular struggles and fuse popular-democratic ideology and its revolutionary class objectives into a coherent political and ideological practice.⁵⁰

The failure of a working-class movement to lead various popular-democratic struggles under the banner of the left is, in fact, a fundamental reason for the rise of the communal-fascist politics of RSS in Gujarat. As Laclau asserts, ‘If fascism was possible it was because the working class, both in its reformist and its revolutionary sectors, had abandoned the arena of popular-democratic struggle.’⁵¹

In India, ‘since secularism is understood principally as an articulated political option, the emphasis is on the mercurial swings of public mood and not on the long duration of social processes’.⁵² That is why we notice multiple examples of the coexistence of both the Congress’s brand of ‘soft communalism’, such as in the Shah Bano case (1986), the unlocking of the Babri Masjid doors (1988), the soft **(p.24)** Hindutva stance in the 2002 Gujarat elections, and so on, and an aggressive version of Hindu nationalism by the RSS-BJP expressed in communal riots in Mumbai (1993), and the state-sponsored genocide in Gujarat (2002). The Hindutva ideology quite contrary to its apparent anti-Western and anti-modern rhetoric in essence perfectly fits with the modern and even postmodern ideology of consumerism.⁵³ But where does the Muslim community stand in the midst of such majoritarianism? What are the political discourses in neoliberal India within which the Indian Muslims are located? These are the concerns in the next section.

Transformative Politics from Hindutva to Moditva

The emergence of Hindutva as a specific political ideology was shaped by the ideas of the triumvirate of Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, Madhav Sadashiv Golwalkar, and Deendayal Upadhyaya. In his political tract, titled *Hindutva*,

Savarkar articulates the tenets of such an ideology. He differentiates between Hindutva and Hinduism very early on in a political pamphlet, which was titled *Essentials of Hindutva* when it was written in 1921–2 and was later published in 1923 under the pseudonym, 'A Mahratta' ('A Maratha'). The pamphlet was later reprinted in 1928 with the new title *Hindutva: Who Is a Hindu?* Savarkar explains:

Hindutva is not a word but a history. Not only the spiritual or religious history of our people as at times it is mistaken to be by being confounded with the other cognate term Hinduism, but a history in full. Hinduism is only a derivative, a fraction, a part of Hindutva. Unless it is made clear what is meant by the latter the first remains unintelligible and vague. Failure to distinguish between these two terms has given rise to much misunderstanding and mutual suspicion between some of **(p.25)** those sister communities that have inherited this inestimable and common treasure of our Hindu civilization.⁵⁴

Savarkar was not a trained historian. He was a lawyer, and yet his portrayal of history of the Indian subcontinent is incredible. The construction, mythification, and mystification of Indian history, created by combining traditional oral narratives and the rich epic of Mahabharata, can be seen in Savarkar's work:

In the great Mahabharata war the king of Sindhu Sauveer figures prominently and is said to have been closely related to the Bharatas. Although the limits of the Sindhu Rashtra shifted from time to time, yet the language that the people speak did then and does even now mark them out as a people by themselves from Multan to the sea, and the name 'Sindhi' which it bears is an emphatic reminder that all those who speak it are Sindhus and are entitled to be recognized as a geographical and political unit in the commonwealth of our Indian people. Although the epithet Bharatakhanda succeeded in almost overshadowing the cradle name of our nation in India, yet the foreign nations seem to have cared little for it and as our frontier provinces continued to be known by their ancient name, so even our immediate neighbours—the Avestic Persians, the Jews, the Greeks and others clung to our ancient name Sindhus or Hindus.... Barring a few examples as that of Afghanistan being called as Shweta Bharat by the Parthians, very rarely indeed had the foreigners forgotten our cradle name or preferred the new one Bharat to it. Down to this day the whole world knows us as 'Hindus' and our land as 'Hindusthan' as if in fulfilment of the wishes of our Vedic fathers who were the first to make that choice.⁵⁵

The same story of finding the genealogy of the 'Hindu people' not in the annals of history but in the fascinating epic of Ramayana can be seen in his following words:

The great mission which the Sindhus had undertaken of founding a nation and a country, found and reached its geographical limit when the valorous Prince of Ayodhya made a triumphant entry in Ceylon and actually brought the whole land from the Himalayas to the Seas under one sovereign sway. The day when the Horse of Victory returned to **(p.26)** Ayodhya unchallenged and unchallengeable, the great white Umbrella of Sovereignty was unfurled over that Imperial throne of Ramchandra the brave, Ramchandra the good and a loving allegiance to him was sworn, not only by the Princes of Aryan blood but Hanuman, Sugriva, Bibhishana from the south—that day was the real birthday of our Hindu people. It was truly our national day: for Aryans and Anaryans knitting themselves into a people were born as a nation.⁵⁶

It is evident from this quote that Savarkar was engaged in a project of producing myths in the name of history, which has been severely contested by professional historians in the last few decades. The historian's work is to scientifically and objectively study historical accounts on the basis of facts and evidence, while the political propaganda of the ideologues of religious fundamentalist movements is to produce a discursive practice and sustain it through continuous political campaign, publicity, and dissemination of such narratives in the social sphere of educational institutions and neighbourhood associations. This project of presenting specific tales about India's past by a non-professional is peculiarly similar to the Islamist ideologue Sayyid Abul A'la Maududi, the founder of the Jamaat-e-Islami and a contemporary of Savarkar. Maududi was a journalist and was constructing a similar history at the time of the partition debates in the 1930s.⁵⁷

Savarkar was also making a distinction between the terms 'Bharatiya' and 'Hindu' by using the concepts of one nation, one race, and one *jati* signifying a universal brotherhood belonging to common blood relations:

(p.27) The reason that explains why the term Hindu cannot be synonymous with Bharatiya or Hindi and mean an Indian only, naturally introduces us to the second essential implication of that term. The Hindus are not merely the citizens of the Indian state because they are united not only by the bonds of the love they bear to a common motherland but also by the bonds of a common blood. They are not only a Nation but also a race-jati. The word jati derived from the root Jan to produce, means a brotherhood, a race determined by a common origin, possessing a common blood. All Hindus claim to have in their veins the blood of the mighty race incorporated with and descended from the Vedic fathers, the Sindhus.⁵⁸

Thus, Thomas Blom Hansen, an academic authority on the Hindu nationalist movement, has correctly pointed out that for Savarkar, Aryan/Vedic Hinduism was the real core of the 'Hindu nation'.⁵⁹ While incisively reading the text of

Savarkar, Hansen delineates five essential tenets. The first is the 'primacy of territory in forming a nationality and praise of the unique and supreme qualities of each nation'. The second feature is 'the notion of the antiquity and common emotional attachment to the name of the nation'. The third doctrine is 'the coherence and unity of language as the central carrier of cultural essence and feeling' signifying the unity of a 'shared Sanskrit and later, of modern Hindi'. The fourth creed involves 'the holistic concept of culture as a corporate whole held together by shared blood and race'. This is because Savarkar 'praised caste endogamy as a mechanism of keeping the blood of the nation pure. Being unable to argue for any intrinsic racial unity, Savarkar resorted to the notion of a common will suffusing the entire Hindu nation'. The final principle of Savarkar is that of 'the simultaneous' and 'the internalized individualization of nationhood'. This is because Hindutva for Savarkar 'is essentially a question of subjective feelings, loyalty, individual patriotism', and a "will to nationhood".⁶⁰ Hansen asks a pertinent question in locating the political ontology of the Hindutva movement or in other words, how does Hindutva as a political ideology exist and thrive and get mass support? Thus, for him, the notion of 'Hindutva makes sense not primarily because of any religious subtext but because it is made to connect meaningfully with (p.28) everyday anxieties of security, a sense of disorder, and more generally the ambivalence of modern life'.⁶¹ He substantiates the argument by saying that the 'articulation of Hindutva (Hinduness) in politics and in public life is primarily a way of making sense of the social world, a strategy that aims at creating a certain order within the disorderly realm of democratic politics, by imposing a matrix of a natural, eternal, and essentialized "Hindu culture" upon it'.⁶²

In contrast to Savarkar, the vision of Golwalkar, the second *sarsanghchalak* or the head of the RSS (after the founding father of the organization, Dr Keshav Baliram Hedgewar), was relatively focused on the organized and conscious effort to change the sociocultural and political life, which would be gradual and long-term and which would inject the 'true national spirit in all spheres of social life'.⁶³ In Golwalkar's interpretation of Hindu life, the community of Hindus cannot be defined as such, but it can only be 'felt', making it an 'empty and inexpressible' community of 'lack' and such a lack subtly enables the community to become the Hindu.⁶⁴ This is evident from Golwalkar's writings which define 'Hinduness, Hindu nation, and Hindu patriotism' in a state of 'becoming' and thus an ideal 'state of nationhood can only be realized through cultivation of strength, physical and spiritual'.⁶⁵ Hansen maintains that political power in the form of sovereignty and national strength was crucial to Golwalkar's vision of a Hindu nation with his advocacy for an active 'unitary state', his opposition to reorganization of linguistic states, which he believed would weaken the cohesion of Hindu society, his proposal for 'One Country, One State, One Legislature, and One Executive' to strengthen the country to counter foreign aggression, and his

favouring a strong defence force as well as, if necessary, a final large-scale war against Pakistan and China.⁶⁶

However, Golwalkar, much like Savarkar, was locating the ideal Hindu race and an ideal Hindu man in the epic of Ramayana.

(p.29) The love for country is an essential factor in the national life of a Race. Indeed to be nationally minded is also expressed as being 'patriotic' i.e. having pride in one's fatherland. If a Race possesses such love and pride in its country, it is right-minded, its Nation consciousness is manifestly awake. Such a Nation consciousness manifesting itself in love for the 'Motherland'—has always been a living: one in the Hindu Race, and has found its most beautiful and touching expression in the epic Ramayana, when, on being suggested that it would be better to reign in the newly conquered territory of Lanka, rather than risk an encounter with his brother, Bharat, who may have, during the period of Rama's exile, become a changed man, avaricious of the parental crown, the divine Hero of the Epic, Shri Ramchandra—the ideal Hindu Man and king—replied, 'Oh! Lakshmana! This golden land of Lanka, with all its riches, has no appeal for me. To me my mother and my motherland are greater by far than Heaven itself'.⁶⁷

Besides Savarkar and Golwalkar, of late, the projection of Deendayal Upadhyaya's thought in the official discourses of the BJP and the central government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi is interesting.⁶⁸ In fact, an RSS ideologue has recently argued that Upadhyaya transformed the Jana Sangh from merely an ideological outfit to a cadre-based party and that he played the same role for the BJP that Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi did for the Congress.⁶⁹ Upadhyaya was a full-time organizer of the RSS and was commissioned to work **(p.30)** for the Bharatiya Jana Sangh (BJS) from its inception in 1951.⁷⁰ In the 1950s and 1960s, the Hindutva brigade was fragmented as there were parallel party organizations of Jana Sangh and Hindu Mahasabha fighting for a similar ideological space. Upadhyaya developed a set of concepts named under the umbrella term 'Integral Humanism', which was adopted by the Jana Sangh as its official doctrine in 1965.⁷¹ According to Hansen,

Integral Humanism did not depart much from Golwalkar's organicist thought but supplemented it by appropriating significant elements of the Gandhian discourse, and articulated these in a version of Hindu nationalism that aimed at erasing the communal image of the Jana Sangh in favor of a softer, spiritual, nonaggressive image stressing social equality, 'Indianization,' and social harmony. This creation of a new discourse suited specifically to the legitimate problematics and dominant discourses of the political field of the 1960s and 1970s in India also reflected an attempt to

adjust the party and the larger Hindu nationalist movement to a new high profile on the right fringe of the political mainstream, with a considerable following in the urban middle classes in north India after the 1967 general elections.⁷²

Integral Humanism was drafted as a political programme and ‘contained certain concrete visions organised around two themes: morality in politics, and swadeshi (Indian manufacture and consumption) and small-scale industrialization in economies—all Gandhian in their general thematics but distinctly Hindu nationalist in the characteristic style of “integralism”’.⁷³ According to Upadhyaya, ‘the paramount concern in India must be to develop an indigenous economic model that puts the human being at centre stage, and that differs sharply in this respect from both capitalism and communism’.⁷⁴ It is interesting to note that Maududi and his followers in the Jamaat-e-Islami also believed in an economic model that would be a ‘middle path’ opposed to both capitalism and socialism.⁷⁵

(p.31) The RSS also backs the Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP) as a parent organization along with an array of organizations under the broad umbrella of the Sangh Parivar, the family of Hindu nationalist organizations. The VHP aims at a political unity of the Hindus against what it terms as the ‘alien ideologies’ of Islam, Christianity, and communism.⁷⁶ In other words, the antagonistic frontiers are pretty clear within the Hindutva discourses. But it faced the challenge of caste and class in solidifying the unity of a significant number of the religious majority during the several general elections in the last decade of the twentieth century and in the first decade of the twenty-first century. The BJP has traditionally been identified as a Brahmin-Bania party, i.e. party of Brahmins and traders. In the 2014 general elections and later in several state assembly elections, Modi helped to widen the mass base of the BJP with a populist articulation that helped to mobilize various plebeian sectors of the electorate against the country’s oldest political party and its allies.

This is where the tact of Modi’s campaign, which has massive populist appeal, became a game changer. The populist politics of Modi is disseminated to the common people through mediated channels of private television and print journalism and in effect creates a notion of a ‘mediatized populism’.⁷⁷ Along with the televised portrayal of Modi’s image, the social media presence of both Modi and his party helped to connect with technology-savvy young Indians, many of whom form the core supporter base of Hindutva and are active on online internet portals.⁷⁸ In addition, the use of the social media such as Twitter was instrumental in connecting with a significant constituency, which shapes the public image of Modi as an accessible leader in the **(p.32)** domain of the virtual world.⁷⁹ The image of Modi was also projected as a macho leader in independent media and advertisements during the 2014 general elections.⁸⁰

It is crucial to understand the continuity as well as change in the ideological discourses of Savarkar, Golwalkar, and Upadhyaya along with the everyday organizational activities of the Sangh Parivar and the mediated populism of Modi in order to notice the shift from traditional forms of Hindutva mobilization to the Moditva-led mobilization, which has been successful in rallying several plebeian sectors of the Indian population in the recent past. Before directly approaching the specificities of the right-wing populist articulation of Moditva, it is prudent to review the existing forms of populism in those parts of the world where democratic elections are a means to elect governments.

Besides the academic study of left and right populisms,⁸¹ there is a fundamental difference between the mainstream research orientations that treat all kinds of populism as a danger to democracy as in the recent works of Müller⁸² and Weyland⁸³ and those which hold the view that populism **(p.33)** might not be necessarily associated with the extreme right⁸⁴ and that it 'may not be the most appropriate conceptual tool to conceptualize political movements that are outright nationalist, racist and fascist'.⁸⁵ In fact, there is a persuasive argument that ideological purity in the name of liberal, conservative, nationalist, communist, anarchist, populist, or any other forms of classifying politics has always been bogus and that populism is the name of a generalized hybrid form of politics that is intricately connected to democratic politics as a spectre, symptom, and an internal periphery.⁸⁶ Both North and South American experiences tell us that populism has a great democratic and moral significance as it marks the entry of the commons into state politics—whose domain was monopolized by an elitist oligarchy—and thus appeals to the disenfranchised, even if populism might sometimes turn to 'semi-democratic' and 'semi-authoritarian' means of mobilizing the common people.⁸⁷ In fact, from the 1970s onwards, there has been a gradual change in the orientations of the two major parties in the United States of America and the United Kingdom. These parties have made a clear populist turn, where the previous elitist character of key leaders has been recast so as to construct an image of the 'ordinary', which is better able to connect with the masses and which appears to be 'of the people' in an age of media.⁸⁸

(p.34) The recent brush of India's post-colonial populist democracy with Moditva denotes the rise of Narendra Modi as India's prime minister by mobilizing various sections of the Indian population—those holding corporate capital, those in the media, middle classes, Hindutva activists, sections among OBCs, along with the upper-caste poor. Specifically, it is the middle class—traditionally the pro-BJP section and the 'neo-middle class', an aspiring social category that emerged out of the economic growth in the 1990s and 2000s—that voted for Modi in the 2014 general elections. At the same time, because of the birth of this 'neo-middle class', which swung towards Modi with the expectation of jobs and 'development', the BJP was able to break the traditional patterns of OBC voting behaviour, at least in the Hindi belt. Although the Yadavs still vote

for the Samajwadi Party and Rashtriya Janata Dal in north India, and Brhamins and Rajputs tend to vote for the BJP irrespective of their class background, a significant shift has occurred among non-Yadav OBCs towards the BJP because of the factor of aspirational 'neo-middle class', which was instrumental to the massive mandate that the party received in the Hindi heartland.⁸⁹

In this regard, Moditva is not just a specific political agenda with a personality cult but can be described as what Michael Freeden calls a 'micro-ideology' with its thinly identifiable morphology, but is a restricted one much like libertarianism, nationalism, and religious fundamentalism.⁹⁰ Moditva has strong links with a particular articulatory practice that combines the discourses of idealizing the nation, patriotic appeals, business-friendly policies, aspirational attitudes, and anti-corruption rhetoric. In that sense, it is not a macro-ideology with a clear morphological architecture but can be regarded as a micro-ideology that is nothing but a 'thin-centred' variant of political ideologies, in Freeden's parlance.⁹¹ **(p.35)** But Moditva is not just another version of older forms of nationalist and patriotic appeals as we find in the discourses of Hindu nationalism. It is a populist ideology as well. Freeden defines populist ideology as a

mixture of a loose grass-roots assortment of opinions and a top-down, orchestrated belief-system—reflecting both genuine attitudes among sections of the population and views verbalized by individuals who rise unconventionally to positions of leadership, where their own persona channels the alleged singularity of the nation into an imposed singularity of folk representation.⁹²

In addition to the conceptual approach of Freeden that posits an analytical understanding of ideology, Laclau's theory of populism as the logic of equivalence among several underprivileged sectors of the population holds merit.⁹³ Therefore, Moditva as a specific ideological form expresses itself through a peculiar articulatory practice that is used as a strategy of popular mobilization. Previously, Hindutva had shown its limitations by not ensuring an absolute electoral majority for the BJP in the 1990s. In contrast, in the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, Moditva had not only guaranteed a clear majority for the BJP (282 seats) with 10 seats more than the majority mark and over 60 per cent seats for the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) (336 seats), but had also got a significant proportion of votes—31 per cent for the BJP and over 38 per cent for NDA. Although, the vote share of the BJP-led NDA is way below the 50 per cent mark, in a competitive multiparty democracy with a history of fragmented mandate with no party ever getting a majority of its own since 1984, an electoral success of getting even 38 per cent votes is significant.

The victory of the BJP-led NDA in 2014 was a tectonic shift from a secular democratic pole in Indian politics to majoritarian politics. This outcome was a result of primarily six reasons. First, people had voted against the Congress-led UPA-II government, particularly on issues such as inflation and corruption in the absence of a credible secular front at the national level. Second, Modi-led BJP was actively supported by an alliance between the Hindu nationalist ideological organizations comprising the Sangh Parivar and corporate capital. This **(p.36)** alliance made every effort to ensure that the BJP could win a majority on its own. Third, the major game changers were the states of Uttar Pradesh—India's most populous state—Bihar, and Assam, where either a communal riot was organized, or other kinds of communal polarization were effected. Fourth, a significant section of young voters (18–25 years) across many segments of the population, who never saw or have a weak memory of the Babri mosque demolition by Hindutva activists and the Gujarat genocide, helped the BJP reach its highest-ever tally. Fifth, an aspiring middle class, which benefited from neoliberal policies were disillusioned of specific social welfare policies of the incumbent government and staunchly supported a modified version of aggressive neoliberalism. Additionally, in the 2014 general elections, the content and form of the so-called Gujarat model of development and its contradictions were not properly debated.⁹⁴ Instead we noticed an election campaign driven mainly by a personality cult and characterized by personal mud-slinging. Finally, Modi had been successful in selling his political agenda to the backward castes by pointing out that he comes from an OBC background; he also formed successful alliances with small Dalit and OBC parties such as Apna Dal in Uttar Pradesh and Rashtriya Samata Party in Bihar.

In this respect, the obvious question is how did Moditva become a victorious political discourse in India? A discourse has to be *available* to be a discourse. Hindutva was already available within Indian political discourses with core mobilizations from Brahmin and Baniya castes and using various religious symbols of Hindu religion. Moditva mobilized a new set of population groups along with the traditional core sectors of Hindutva mobilization on the plank of right-wing populism. In this respect, Moditva is different from Hindutva in the sense that it is a Hindutva form of populism. The BJP does not have to openly articulate the demands of Hindutva since it is naturally associated with it. Moditva, by contrast, is Hindutva plus the political rhetoric of appealing to backward castes and the corporate model of development. **(p.37)** At the same time, it is backed by a smart technology-driven campaign, the booth-level organizational work of RSS, organization of low-scale communal riots and media management.

The *achhe din* (good times) slogan was used to create the image of Brand Modi in the 2014 general elections. Brand Modi was the successor of Brand India, which was originally crafted during the 1990s with the continual trajectory of neoliberal economic reforms.⁹⁵ However, under the political regime of Moditva,

there were frequent public threats by several Hindutva activists to free speech, and mob lynchings in the name of cow protection became the order of the day; these are testimonies of quite the opposite of 'good days'. In this regard, one must understand that the narrative of Moditva is a basic combination of various Hindutva discourses with a modern packaging of the neoliberal model of development. For example, in the recent past, there has been a pattern of distortion and mythification of history, and irrational assertions have been made by connecting modern scientific innovations with myths by referring to ancient Hindu religious scriptures and ancient epics.⁹⁶

Ever since the Narendra Modi-led BJP government assumed office in New Delhi, there has been a 28 per cent increase in communal violence, with India standing in the fourth position after Syria, Nigeria, and Iraq **(p.38)** for the highest number of social hostilities involving religion.⁹⁷ There have been incidents of forceful conversion of Muslims and Christians in the name of *ghar wapsi* (literally, homecoming) in the recent past.⁹⁸ Even before the arrival of Moditva, there was a proliferation of communally charged and inflammatory hate speeches and the term 'love jihad' was coined to describe cases of Hindu women marrying Muslim men.⁹⁹ In other words, Moditva could be built on available ground prepared by Hindutva. Such Hindutva propaganda has continued ever since Modi's rise to power; examples of the aggressive and assertive Hindutva rhetoric include the open advocacy for according the Bhagwad Gita, a Hindu scripture,¹⁰⁰ the status of national book, and the proclamation by the RSS chief that 'India is a Hindu Rashtra'.¹⁰¹

Similarly, one can notice more voices of hate; an example being when a leader of Shiv Sena demanded that voting rights must be revoked for Muslims.¹⁰² This utterance was made by an MP when Shiv **(p.39)** Sena was still an alliance partner of the BJP. The Election Commission of India expressed 'strong displeasure' over such remarks and advised the MP to be more circumspect in future public utterances. In its order the Commission said that by making such statements, the MP had violated the provisions of the election code.¹⁰³ We can interpret the MP's statement in many ways. First, the MP is suggesting that since India is predominantly a 'Hindu country', Muslims must not vote for a few years until they become more aware of 'Hindu culture', as the standard rhetoric of the Hindutva forces is to make Muslims more nationalist and patriotic despite the fact that most Muslims in India favour principles of secularism, nationalism, and patriotism. The second interpretation of such a comment may be the following—all Muslim residents in India are not citizens but are 'infiltrators'. Finally, the subtext of such an assertion is that since India is predominantly a 'Hindu country', one need not have to acknowledge the plurality, heterogeneity, and differential identities of the Indian population. Another example of such crude assertions is the controversial comment of Minister Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi, a minority face of the BJP, suggesting that those who eat beef must go to Pakistan.¹⁰⁴ He was defending the recently imposed ban on beef-eating by the

BJP-led state government in Maharashtra while answering a question by the noted journalist Rajdeep Sardesai. Similarly, in contemporary India, one can witness the debate around the National Register of Citizens in Assam, the proposal to amend the **(p.40)** Citizenship Act of 1955 in a new Amendment Bill of 2016 with the clause of discriminating between Muslim and non-Muslim illegal immigrants from neighbouring South Asian countries.¹⁰⁵ All such discursive practises are taking place within the larger structure of Moditva.

In 2014, the appeal of Moditva for the poor was the promise of an alternative in the form of 'achhe din', a change from the state of policy paralysis and charges of corruption plaguing the Congress-led UPA-II regime. In Laclauian terms, 'achhe din' acts as an empty signifier for which various segments of the population are mobilized against a common antagonistic frontier.¹⁰⁶ The articulatory practice of Moditva boasts that the government will work for the poor as the prime agent of Moditva (the prime minister himself) comes from a humble background. His statement, 'Hard work is more powerful than Harvard',¹⁰⁷ evidently takes a dig at those elites who have access to the top universities of the world—and which must not be only seen as a specific response to the Harvard economist Amartya Sen, who opposed the policy of demonetization. Such a public statement is just one glaring example of the Moditva brand of populist rhetoric. In the last few years, what the mainstream media is calling as 'Modinomics' is the implementation of a series of drastic measures to cut social-sector expenditure. For example, the central government has significantly slashed the health budget, already one of the world's lowest. The central government has also allocated less funds for higher education. There is a visible decline in social-sector spending, particularly in education and health. The decline began during the UPA-II regime, gradually falling from a peak expenditure of 10.4 per cent of the total budget allocation on the social sector in 2010–11 to 5.3 per cent as according to the **(p.41)** 2017–18 revised estimates. This is partly because of the 14th Finance Commission's recommendations, which increased tax devolutions to states and the central government made cuts on several centrally sponsored schemes that involved social-sector spending.¹⁰⁸ The budget figures from 2014–15 to 2018–19 show that the allocation of central funds for health has been between 1.8 per cent to 2.4 per cent while in the case of education, there is a drastic fall from 6.15 per cent in 2014–15 to 3.48 per cent in 2018–19.¹⁰⁹ Moreover, in June 2017, the formal approval of privatizing the national airline, Air India, is seen as another step forward in the government's reforms agenda.¹¹⁰

In the recent past, the major economic reforms that the Modi government has accomplished are the following: (a) unified national tax on goods and services; (b) deregulation of diesel pricing; (c) allowing more than 50 per cent foreign investments in the railways, which had been the monopoly of the public sector; (d) opening the construction sector for foreign direct investment; (e) allowing foreign direct investment in the coal and mining sector; (f) extension of the

expiration date of trade licences; (g) instituting quick and easy process for companies to go through bankruptcy; (h) removal of sectoral investment limits; and (i) putting in place transparent auctions of the telecom spectrum.¹¹¹ As a result, the process of liberalization of the economy has deepened with government proposals to completely open up sectors such as insurance, railways, defence, retail, pension, and so on on the one hand and to bring about aggressive urbanization on the other. Such policies **(p.42)** will only increase the capital accumulation process by various means of dispossession, encroachment, and displacement, and will serve to enhance the risk of worsening the living conditions of the lower strata of the population. Therefore, the current tendency of Moditva is to pursue a neoliberal growth-centric project without a proper redistributive strategy.

At the same time, besides GST and demonetization, several populist moves have been made by Modi in recent years. Such populist policies include the following: (a) Jan Dhan account scheme that started from 15 August 2014, which is the national mission for financial inclusion to ensure access to financial services, namely savings accounts, remittance, credit, insurance, pension in an affordable manner; (b) affordable housing scheme under the flagship Pradhan Mantri Gramin Awas Yojna with the aim of providing 'housing for all' by 2022 with a 'pucca house' for every family in urban cities along with water connection, toilet facilities, and 24 × 7 electricity supply; (c) Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Gram Jyoti Yojana launched to ensure 24 × 7 electricity supply to farmers and rural households; and (d) PM Ujjwala Yojana, launched as an ambitious social welfare scheme to provide 50 million LPG connections to women below the poverty line across the country.¹¹² Such populist policies appended with the newly launched Ayushman Bharat scheme that involves government support to health insurance and free medical care help to build a Moditva form of state populism.

Moditva is also coexisting with other types of state populism such as those practised by the long regimes in Bengal, Bihar, and Odisha or different kinds of state populisms in Tamil Nadu. These state populisms stand in contrast to the theoretical literature on populism, such as that of Laclau, which in effect propose an oppositional politics with a left-wing ideological core. While populism is regarded as the equivalential logic of the people against an antagonistic frontier including the state, the specific form of state populism as it exists today in India *uses* the state to challenge a real or perceived enemy. In other words, the logic **(p.43)** of anti-establishment populist political challenge is being transformed into using the state apparatuses against an enemy, thus giving a unique dimension to the populist configuration. Today, various forms of state populisms exist under conditions of what has been previously stated in this chapter as neoliberalism with Indian characteristics. However, this state populism has been very much present for quite some time in some parts of the world such as the Peronist regime in Argentina, the Gaddafi regime in Lybia, and Indira Gandhi's government in the late 1960s and early 1970s in India. Today,

we can also see the state populisms of Sheikh Hasina in Bangladesh and the Latin American state populisms being carried on in the name of socialism in the twenty-first century. What is unique in India is that electoral majorities are making use of state populism whereas in many cases of state populisms in Asia, Africa, and Latin America the backing of the army or civil society is visible.

In the light of the preceding discussions, contemporary politics in India under the neoliberal dispensation can be broadly characterized into three distinct politico-ideological terrains. In the first place, we have the hegemonic formation of the politico-ideological strand of neoliberal consensus. This neoliberalism is characterized by liberalization, privatization, and globalization in economic and cultural fields. The politics and policies of neoliberalism in contemporary India can also be described as politics of status quo, which prefers only a change in political parties in governing the country but is guided by the neoliberal consensus for the dominant policy programme. The Congress and the BJP have been the most vocal supporters of this neoliberal consensus. The two major national political parties in the neoliberal camp generally fight with each other over the issue of a correct and better way of implementing neoliberal policies and the political fight is often marked with the debate of how one party is better than another in serving the purpose of implementing a better neoliberal policy regime. Vis-à-vis the excluded groups of Dalits, Adivasis, Muslims, women, and so on, the politics of status quo is often marked by the politics of accommodation, where a selective leadership among the excluded are given a token representation along with the promise of the fulfilment of several democratic demands such as affirmative action, particularly to benefit the excluded groups.

Second, one can notice a politics of particularism with a narrow sectarian approach primarily making several democratic demands for **(p.44)** only a core group or community. This politics of particularism is aptly expressed among the excluded groups, although it is more organized in the case of Dalits. The politics of particularism is also a celebration of marginality and differences without having an agenda of social transformation. It tries to critique the dominant politics of status quo from outside, but at times it also collaborates with it. Thus, politics of particularism in India is of vacillating nature, which sometimes opposes and at times aligns with the hegemonic formation of neoliberal consensus and its political representatives—the Congress and the BJP. In India, caste and regionalist parties are quite organized. Articulate representatives of this kind of politics of particularism harbour ambitions of becoming dominant players in national politics without having an agenda of fundamentally restructuring society, economy, and polity. Instead they rely on tokenism and symbolism, such as appointing a Dalit or OBC head of the state or a chief minister who is proud to celebrate her or his linguistic identity. In the fourth chapter of this book, I will try to trace a politics of Muslim particularism, which, however, is unorganized and split into different political strategies, and I would

also like to expose the limits of such a politics of particularism among Indian Muslims.

Third, Indian politics always had a left-wing space that can be identified as an oppositional politico-ideological terrain. The political ontology and historical genealogy of left politics is actually grounded upon an oppositional politics instead of a craving for power. The most creative intellectual and political movements that have been offered by the left globally have been when it acts as an opposing force to existing socio-economic and political structures rather than when it comfortably forms the government and negotiates with the power bloc of capital and the apparatuses of the state. I shall discuss the prospects and problems of such a left-wing project in Chapter 4 and in the epilogue of this book.

Chapterization

Every chapter of the book, including the prologue and the epilogue, is preceded by a relevant quote in the form of an epigraph, anchoring the crux of the debates and core arguments presented in that chapter. In this respect, the Prologue, 'Muslim Identity Formation in Neoliberal India' contextualizes the socio-economic conditions of Muslim **(p.45)** minorities in contemporary India by reviewing the political, policymaking, and academic discourses. It will lead to Chapter 1 on the Muslim question, which argues that the response of the progressive academia and the progressive politics involving the Muslim question have been constrained by being trapped within the discourses of communalism and secularism, rather than being informed by a view of the Muslims as a marginalized group such as the Dalits, Adivasis, and women. The field has thus been left open for the emergence of a politics of Muslim particularism, which lacks any perspective of transcending neoliberalism, a system that oppresses and exploits not only workers and peasants but also marginalized groups. Such a politics of Muslim particularism, which is predominantly focused on the issues of Muslim identity (such as Personal Laws, blasphemy, minority status of educational institutions, and so on) and security, will be dealt with in Chapter 4. The limits of such narrow sectarian politics and a possibility of a progressive radical democratic politics will be discussed in the Epilogue.

Chapter 1, 'The Muslim Question in the Neoliberal Regime', points out the socio-economic backwardness of Indian Muslims while analysing various data sets from census and National Sample Survey Office reports, India Human Development Reports, the Sachar Committee Report, the Arjun Sengupta Report, the Ranganath Misra Commission Report, and other relevant literature. The chapter will argue that the Muslim question has been traditionally trapped in a communal-secular binary. The data provided by various sources give us ample opportunity to look into the Muslim question after close to three decades of liberalization as a class question that is also plagued by the problems of discrimination and exclusion faced by Indian Muslims. The chapter will further

elaborate on the conditions of possibility for the construction and formation of the 'Indian Muslim' as a political identity.

Chapter 2, 'Imag(in)ing Indian Muslims in Post-liberalization Hindi Cinema', depicts the ways in which the image of Indian Muslims is constructed in the contemporary cultural reproduction of popular Bollywood cinema, which also acts as an ideological state apparatus. It argues that a constant process of vilification of the Muslims in popular Hindi cinema has produced the image of a 'Muslim Other' that is contradictory to the image of a law-abiding Indian citizen. Such a process of cultural homogenization via a stereotyped image of Muslims in Bollywood movies not only threatens and distorts the images of **(p.46)** common Indian Muslims but also creates an environment of suspicion towards Muslims in popular perception. Although some have argued that 'the cultural boundaries of a people are believed to coincide with the national boundaries of the state',¹¹³ this chapter will argue that the image of indigenous cultural fixations of the Muslim community have certainly been affected by the incursion of the stereotyped model of dominant, mainstream, popular culture such as Bollywood cinema into both foreign territories and the domestic domain. This chapter will show that Bollywood films have not significantly dealt with the livelihood problems of Indian Muslims arising out of the economic and educational backwardness of the community. Rather, Hindi cinema as a popular cultural medium disseminates the idea of mistrust and suspicion towards Muslims. In most cases, it reinforces a belief coloured by such mythical image constructions that Muslims are, by and large, more aligned to a foreign territory, and more loyal to religion than to patriotism and national unity. Bollywood films also create some stereotypical images of Muslim characters that are replete with clichéd formulas or cultural symbols—such as sporting beards and wearing caps. Muslims are often represented as historical figures, for example, nawabs and emperors, besides being portrayed as terrorists, villains, and gangsters. The image constructions of Muslims in Bollywood cinema have far-reaching effects in shaping the dominant discourse regarding the identity of Indian Muslims, which is not only restricted to the viewership among the Indian population, but also crosses borders to reach the diasporic Indian community and non-Indian population for mass consumption. In such a situation, rather than there being cultural assimilation and dialogue between various communities in a secular democracy, there is a contestation between dominant cultural forms—such as Bollywood cinema with its mythical and stereotyped cultural representations—and the much marginalized struggle of the Muslim community to come out of that constructed imagination. Bollywood's stereotyped images of the Muslim community shape the available political discourses that equate Muslims with 'anti-national terrorists', particularly after the emergence of Kashmiri secessionist movements in the early 1990s and post September 11.

(p.47) Partha Chatterjee eloquently explains how community has become the 'convenient descriptive' category for 'classifying groups of people into suitable targets for administrative, legal, economic, and electoral policy' of postcolonial states.¹¹⁴ According to Chatterjee, in many cases, the classificatory criteria that were used by colonial governmental regimes 'have continued into the postcolonial era, shaping the forms of both political demands and developmental policy'.¹¹⁵ Therefore, both caste and religion in India 'have remained the dominant criteria for identifying communities among the population as objects of policy'.¹¹⁶

In this context, Chapter 3, 'Indian Muslims and the Politics of Affirmative Action', will assess the underlying political logic of community-based affirmative action and reservation, which is promoted as the new ameliorative policy to address the deprivation of Indian Muslims under conditions of economic reforms. Besides, the chapter will try to point out the missing links in the Sachar Committee Report and will endeavour to take into account a host of other suggestions that the Sachar Committee Report did not recommend concerning the socio-economic development of Indian Muslims. The chapter will argue that the Sachar Committee did not take into account the land question among Muslims and the (under)representation of Muslim political leadership in various governmental institutions, which is significant as the socio-economic development of a particular community is also related to political representation. The report also misses out on specific problems of Muslim women while ignoring the only case of Muslim over-representation, which is in the jails. Finally, while evaluating the merits of the Sachar and Misra Commission Reports along with defending the ethical grounds for affirmative action for Muslims in India, this chapter will also try to unearth the limits of affirmative action in general in the context of the neoliberal dispensation.

Chapter 4, 'Political Articulations of Indian Muslims in an Era of Globalization', will analyse the politics of Muslim particularism. It will argue how the absence of progressive political leadership among the Muslim minorities in India has created conditions in which the **(p.48)** theo-political identity of Indian Muslims has been foregrounded at the cost of their class and citizenship identities. In this chapter, I will try to locate the Muslim politics in India as part and parcel of a particular genre of *subaltern* politics with its specific dynamics of discrimination and exclusion.¹¹⁷

The politics of *inclusion* and *exclusion* concerning Indian Muslims has its peculiarities. Theoretically, one can well argue that the politics of exclusion involves asserting the voice of the excluded, articulating and struggling for the interests of the excluded within the ambit of the dominant power structures, and sitting at the negotiating table to get more empowerment. Thus, the politics of exclusion may also be seen as the first step for a possibility of a politics of inclusion as well. But the problematics of inclusion may be attached to the

problem of co-option, appropriation, and collaboration when negotiating with the dominant power structures. In this respect, the politics of exclusion may offer three politico-ideological terrains. In the first place, a politics of exclusion may have its aspirations for entry into the dominant power structures with the agenda of discrimination, deprivation, **(p.49)** and exclusion. That is to say, this kind of position has an inclusive plan for its constituency without having the agenda of a radical or fundamental transformation of the political discourse emerging out of the dominant power structures. So, the first position can be of a direct collaborationist, a position of being a sell-off to the dominant power elite.

The second position may be to celebrate the location or situation of *exclusion* itself while sitting in the *margins* and then attacking the dominant power bloc from outside, but without having a radical agenda of social transformation. This form of position serves its very own vested interests by keeping alive the problems of deprivation, inequality, discrimination, and exclusion as it gives its constituency and its representatives a ground for mobilization in the name of empowerment and recognition. This view can be identified with the position of a safety valve in maintaining the status quo. This politico-ideological position may be called politics of altered status quo which vacillates between collaboration and opposition to the dominant power bloc.

Finally, there can be a third position which represents the politics of social transformation to change the structures of dominant discourse itself with an ethico-political project. This position has a progressive agenda to include the excluded in its terms by providing a counter-hegemony while replacing and displacing the dominant power structures. Here, the excluded wants to include itself in the power structures of society by occupying the seats of power, not in the terms and conditions of the hegemon as in the first position of a collaborator, but in its terms and conditions, by providing counter-hegemony. A progressive and radical democratic movement in Muslim societies can occupy this third position. However, this is not to suggest that the politics of co-option and collaboration cannot or may not take place in this phase. But my attempt in this theorization is to locate an autonomous political space in waging a universalist struggle of resistance against the dominant power structures, unlike the second position of particularism with its vacillating tendencies, without being hired by the strategic mechanisms of appropriation of the power bloc. In an overall analysis, these positions are not static but may overlap and may also replace one another. Nonetheless, these three positions may be attained and thus have their autonomous spaces in different moments and contexts of bargaining, negotiations, and contestations with the dominant system. **(p.50)** The Muslim question in India can be traced mainly to these three very different positions that have been briefly enumerated in the preceding discussion.

The Epilogue, 'Towards a Radical Democratic Politics in India' will argue that a *politics of social justice* with core democratic demands for affirmative action and representation needs to be complemented with a *politics of distributive justice* that has a concern with equity. Thus, in order to address the issue of marginalization, a progressive politics needs to articulate the 'issues of both "redistribution" and "recognition"'.¹¹⁸ It will argue that a radical democratic politics needs to be constructed in such a way that its political appeal is relevant for the marginalized groups, including Muslims, by emphasizing both social justice and distributive justice with a vision of transcending neoliberalism. In India, more often than not, various excluded groups only become content with sops such as affirmative action while the neoliberal status quo gets secured without more significant challenges in order to form a popular demand of transforming the existing political and economic system. In such a situation, the hegemony of neoliberal regime gets sustained, and the counter-hegemonic politics of the people becomes weaker in offering a simultaneous politics of resistance and social transformation. In response to such a hegemonic presence of neoliberal regime in India, a radical democratic project of making equivalential relations with various marginalized sectors of the population—namely, workers, peasants, Dalits, Adivasis, women, and Muslims—is more relevant than ever. Such a project seeks to organize a united people's resistance, a kind of counter-hegemonic struggle against all forms of subordination, against all dominant social formations and against the multifarious structures of power.

By this time, it must be amply clear that I am trying to deal with several theoretical formulations and research concerns. But there has to be some *anchor* around which the treatment with various methods and approaches would give some meaning to the questions that I seek to answer in this book. In this respect, the concept of 'entry point' is fundamental in social sciences. As Stephen Resnick and Richard Wolff argue,

(p.51) Every theorist picks one (or perhaps several) of the many aspects and uses it (them) as a focus, a means to bring a particular order or coherence to the initial chaos of mutually interacting social activities. In other words, this focus permits a particular understanding of all the aspects from the perspective of the chosen one. This choice assigns great importance to this particular aspect, for it now serves as a guide to the theorist pointing the way to an orderly path out of initial disorder. In a sense, a door has been opened into the analysis of relationships, and thus we refer to this as the choice of an 'entry point' concept. Choosing a particular concept as an entry point implies a commitment to a singular organisational principle or taxonomy in one's theorising. It means that the theorist has adopted a unique way to approach and classify the complex of interacting aspects with which he or she is initially confronted. Dividing the world into entry point and non-entry point aspects are the necessary first step in making sense of the chaos of aspects—otherwise no sense is

possible at all. However, different conceptual divisions produce different kinds of senses; theories with different entry points produce different taxonomies of aspects and ultimately different knowledges of the world.¹¹⁹

I shall not depart from what both Resnick and Wolff have said on the concept of the entry point. Thus, the research concerns in the book are related to the broader context of neoliberal India with an array of conceptual formulations such as Indian Muslim, Muslim particularism, hegemonic universalism, progressive political articulation, '*availability and non-availability of political discourses*', and '*radical democratic politics*' as the foci of the study suggests at the macro level. Its micro manifestations are reflected in the issues of Muslim marginality, deprivation, discrimination, and exclusion despite the initial chaotic-anarchic disorder of multiplicity of several disciplinary approaches and '*mutually interacting social activities*'.

However, the book is not at all devoid of limitations. Muslims as a minority community do not constitute a homogenous group. In fact, the Muslim community is as fragmented as any other religious conglomeration on the lines of linguistic, theological, gender, and caste differentials. Indeed, the notion of a monolithic pan-Indian Muslim identity **(p.52)** is as misleading as that of a similarly constructed pan-Indian Hindu identity. Both notions are, in effect, elite constructs that entirely gloss over internal differences and contradictions. The book tries to map the Muslim situation broadly on an all-India basis on the grounds of socio-economic parameters and does not take into account the regional-, caste-, and state-level differentiations among the Muslim community in great detail. Thus, all the questions raised in this Prologue may not have direct answers in this book but only make a small beginning and take a little initiative in answering some of the aforementioned broader theoretical questions. I put these questions forward for future studies on Indian Muslims.

There are several readings on various aspects of Muslim life and culture that are very heterogeneous, like the community itself. For example, I have not elaborately dealt with the idea of caste, family practices, and distinct ritualistic cultures among Indian Muslims as a considerable body of literature already exists that deals with these issues.¹²⁰ I have also not discussed the intricate dynamics of Muslim politics and Muslim political participation¹²¹ in the post-colonial Indian state apart from in the final chapter, which seeks to locate some of the trends of Muslim politics; but this too is confined to only a brief theoretical elaboration and is not a full-fledged empirical study of Muslim politics. Neither have I tried to discuss in great detail about various faith-based organizations such as Tablighi Jamaat, nor the religio-political organizations such as Jamiat-Ulema-i-Hind, nor the diverse theological sects within Indian Islam such as Deobandis, Bareilvis, Ahle Hadis, nor the prime political parties led

by Indian Muslims such as the Muslim League, All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM), and All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF).

(p.53) Instead, as a political theorist, I have tried to conceptually grasp the politico-ideological space of what I have called the politics of Muslim particularism with specific particularist demands that all the Muslim groups in India mentioned earlier articulate. The book also implicitly puts the Muslim question in India *beyond* the symbolic and cultural representations of Urdu, minority institutions, Muslim Personal Law, Babri Masjid, censorship issues, or banning the works of controversial authors. Instead the book discusses the *real problems* of Indian Muslims: which are socio-economic and political in nature. Therefore, the fundamental questions that this book tries to look at are of the following: How are the Indian Muslims performing in socio-economic terms in the successive neoliberal regimes in India? What is the Muslim situation in India in an era of economic reforms? What is the nature of socio-economic, political, and cultural representation of Indian Muslims in an era of liberalization? In all the chapters throughout this book I have, primarily, tried to synthesize empirical studies with political theory.

Conversely, the book is firmly grounded in the post-Marxist political theory tradition.¹²² Post-Marxism, as evident, is not a complete rejection of Marxism but entails revisiting and reactivating the Marxist categories, locating the limitations of orthodox Marxist analysis, and thus moving beyond the intellectual tradition of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Marxism by inventing new conceptual apparatuses in the light of the contemporary problems of global capitalism and information-ruled society.¹²³ The post-Marxist terrain argues that ‘it is no longer possible to maintain the conception of subjectivity and classes elaborated by Marxism, nor its vision of the historical course of capitalist development, nor, of course, the conception of communism **(p.54)** as a transparent society from which antagonisms have disappeared’. Rather, it is through ‘the development of certain intuitions and discursive forms constituted within Marxism, and the inhibition or elimination of certain others’ that a concept of hegemony could be constructed and which, ‘may be a useful instrument in the struggle for a radical, libertarian and plural democracy’.¹²⁴ The post-Marxist landscape not only helps ‘to clarify the meaning of contemporary social struggles but also give[s] Marxism its theoretical dignity’¹²⁵—which it deserved but which was blemished by idolatrous, iconoclastic, and ritualistic practices that became significant at the cost of ignoring the revolutionary potential of the originality of Marxist thought in the hands of such exclusive intellectual culture that parcelled Marxist theory in clannish cliques. It is from such a post-Marxist political perspective that I approach various issues of a particularist question such as that of the Indian Muslims and move beyond to theorize about the prospect of a universalist project of radical democracy in

India. I hope that such a point of view would lead to a more nuanced study of the subject in question—*Indian Muslim(s) after Liberalization*.

Notes:

(*) Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, 'Preface to the Second Edition' of *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*, 2nd ed. (London: Verso, 2001 [1985]), p. xvi.

(¹) I am considering the year 1991 as the starting point of the process of neoliberal economic reforms in India. This date can be justified while locating the Indian version of neoliberalism within the broader structural trend of the history of global capitalism, which signifies the period after 1990 as the period of neoliberalism. See Kojin Karatani, *The Structure of World History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), p. 273, and pp. 276–84. However, I am aware of the contemporary history of neoliberalism in India for which Baldev Raj Nayar's work *Globalisation and Nationalism: The Changing Balance in India's Economic Policy, 1950–2000* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2001) is seminal. He argues that the process of liberalization started in the late 1970s and gathered momentum in the 1980s leading to the economic reforms of the 1990s. Also, Rahul Mukherji's work on the evolution of economic reforms in India from the mid-1970s along the path of economic globalization and competitiveness during 1975–91 is beneficial in this regard. See Rahul Mukherji, *Globalization and Deregulation: Ideas, Interests, and Institutional Change in India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 63–107.

(²) Maidul Islam, *Limits of Islamism: Jamaat-e-Islami in Contemporary India and Bangladesh* (New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

(³) Islam, *Limits of Islamism*, pp. 6–7.

(⁴) Marshall G.S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization*, vol. 1, *The Classical Age of Islam* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1974), p. 57.

(⁵) Shahab Ahmed, *What Is Islam? The Importance of Being Islamic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015).

(⁶) See Dipankar Gupta, 'Citizens versus People: The Politics of Majoritarianism and Marginalization in Democratic India' (2005 Paul Hanly Furfey Lecture), *Sociology of Religion*, vol. 68, no. 1 (Spring 2007), pp. 27–44. A similar kind of conceptualization about the contestations between 'civilized and law-abiding middle class' and 'illiterate and corrupt forces' in the context of multiple locations of sovereign power with the background of modern India's communal violence is convincingly argued by Thomas Blom Hansen in 'Sovereigns beyond the State: On Legality and Public Authority in India', in *Religion, Violence and*

Political Mobilisation in South Asia, edited by Ravinder Kaur (New Delhi: Sage, 2005), pp. 109–44.

(⁷) A survey of economic policies in India, within the global and the Indian context, from the phase of Keynesian and socialist policies during the Nehruvian era to the emergence of market-centric strategies to form a consensus to liberalize economic reforms can be seen in Sudipta Kaviraj, 'The Politics of Liberalisation in India', in *The Trajectories of the Indian State: Politics and Ideas* (Ranikhet: Permanent Black, 2010), pp. 234–71.

(⁸) Friedrich August von Hayek, *The Constitution of Liberty* with a new introduction by Irwin M. Stelzer (London: Routledge Classics, 2006 [1960]).

(⁹) Milton Friedman, *Capitalism and Freedom*, with the assistance of Rose D. Friedman, 40th anniversary edition (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002 [1962]).

(¹⁰) Ernesto Laclau, *New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time* (London: Verso, 1990), p. xiii.

(¹¹) Rohit Azad, Prasenjit Bose, and Zico Dasgupta, 'Riskless Capitalism in India: Bank Credit and Economic Activity', *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 52, no. 31 (5 August 2017), pp. 85–98.

(¹²) Aditi Gandhi and Michael Walton, 'Where Do India's Billionaires Get Their Wealth?' *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 47, no. 40 (6 October 2012), pp. 10–14.

(¹³) Lucas Chancel and Thomas Piketty, 'Indian Income Inequality, 1922–2014: From British Raj to Billionaire Raj?' WID.world Working Paper Series, Number 2017/11 (July 2017), pp. 1–49. Available online at <http://wid.world/document/chancelpiketty2017widworld/>, accessed the version of 7 September 2017 on 4 December 2017.

(¹⁴) Abhijit Banerjee and Thomas Piketty, 'Top Indian Incomes, 1922–2000', in *Top Incomes: A Global Perspective*, edited by A.B. Atkinson and Thomas Piketty (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 1–39.

(¹⁵) The Oxfam press release available at <https://www.oxfamindia.org/pressrelease/2093>, accessed on 20 March 2018.

(¹⁶) See the news report: 'Richest 1% Cornered 73% of Wealth Generated in India in 2017: Oxfam Survey', *The Wire*, 22 January 2018, available at <https://thewire.in/economy/richest-1-cornered-73-wealth-generated-india-2017-oxfam-survey>, accessed on 20 March 2018.

(¹⁷) *Oxfam Report: Reward Work, Not Wealth*, Oxfam Briefing Paper January 2018 (Oxford: Oxfam International, 2018), p. 26.

(¹⁸) Credit Suisse is a multinational banking and financial services company founded in 1856 with headquarters in Zurich.

(¹⁹) Anthony Shorrocks, Jim Davies, and Rodrigo Lluberas, *Global Wealth Databook 2017* (Zurich: Credit Suisse Research Institute, November 2017), p. 117.

(²⁰) Shorrocks, Davies, and Lluberas, *Global Wealth Databook 2017*, p. 31.

(²¹) Kalyan Sanyal, *Rethinking Capitalist Development: Primitive Accumulation, Governmentality and Post-Colonial Capitalism*, with an introduction by Partha Chatterjee (New Delhi: Routledge, 2013 [2007]); Partha Chatterjee, 'Democracy and Economic Transformation in India', *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 43, no. 16 (19 April 2008), pp. 53–62.

(²²) 'Wealth of India's 100 Richest Soars on Forbes List', 5 October 2017, available at <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbespr/2017/10/05/wealth-of-indias-100-richest-soars-on-forbes-list/#29a96d754d08>, accessed on 4 December 2017.

(²³) Thomas Piketty and Nancy Qian, 'Income Inequality and Progressive Income Taxation in China and India, 1986–2015', in *Top Incomes: A Global Perspective*, edited by A.B. Atkinson and Thomas Piketty (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 40–75.

(²⁴) Piketty and Qian, 'Income Inequality and Progressive Income Taxation', p. 52.

(²⁵) Piketty and Qian, 'Income Inequality and Progressive Income Taxation', p. 57.

(²⁶) On 8 November 2016, the prime minister of India announced the policy of demonetization with effect from 9 November 2016. The Ministry of Finance, Government of India, via a gazette notification dated 8 November 2016 implemented the plan of demonetization by ceasing the legal tender of high denomination notes of INR 500 and INR 1,000. The gazette notification pointed out that ceasing the legal tender of 'bank notes of denominations of the existing series of the value of five hundred rupees and one thousand rupees' was recommended by the central board of directors of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). According to the notification, the reasons of ceasing the legal tender of old currency notes of INR 500 and INR 1,000 were three: (a) large circulation of fake currency notes, which are difficult to differentiate from genuine bank notes; as a result, such fake currency notes have an adverse impact on the country's economy; (b) high-denomination bank notes are used by people for storing

unaccounted wealth as evident from the large cash recoveries made by law enforcement agencies; and (c) fake currency is used to finance drug trafficking and terrorism, causing damage to the economy and security of the country (see *The Gazette of India Extraordinary*, Part II, Section 3, Sub-section [ii], Ministry of Finance [New Delhi: Controller of Publications, Government of India], 8 November 2016).

(²⁷) 'No Farm Loan Waiver by Centre, Says Jaitley', *The Hindu*, 20 June 2017, available at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/no-farm-loan-waiver-from-centre-says-arun-jaitley/article19108350.ece>, accessed on 4 December 2017; 'RBI Governor Questions Farm Loan Waiver', *The Times of India*, 1 September 2017, available at <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/business/india-business/patel-questions-farm-loan-waiver/articleshow/60315926.cms>, accessed on 4 December 2017.

(²⁸) The political strength of the rural rich in the form of agrarian capitalists/rich farmers/landed elites in the pre-liberalization phase has been dealt with in Pranab Bardhan, *The Political Economy of Development in India* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984); Achin Vanaik, *The Painful Transition: Bourgeois Democracy in India* (London: Verso, 1990); Lloyd I. Rudolph and Susanne Hoeber Rudolph, *In Pursuit of Lakshmi: The Political Economy of the Indian State* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987); Ashutosh Varshney, *Democracy, Development and the Countryside: Urban-Rural Struggles in India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

(²⁹) Founded on 16 April 1948, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development was formed to stimulate economic progress and world trade. Currently, it has 36 member countries.

(³⁰) The emergence of *Moditva* can be located within the larger political genre of right-wing populism. The term '*Moditva*' is used to connote a specific kind of political articulation by the erstwhile Gujarat chief minister and the current prime minister of India, Narendra Modi, which combines nationalism, patriotism, and economic development. A glimpse of such an articulation could be traced in Siddharth Mazumdar's, *Moditva: The Idea behind the Man*, with forewords by Kiran Bedi, Jaswant Singh, and Subramanian Swamy (Ahmedabad: Citizens for Accountable Governance, 2014).

(³¹) In fact, *Hindutva*, in the decade of 1990s and early 2000s, was already a potent combination of neoliberalism and communal agenda (see Radhika Desai, 'Forward March of *Hindutva* Halted?', *New Left Review*, vol. 30 [November–December 2004], pp. 49–67). Thus, '*Moditva*' does not have to always specifically articulate the agenda of *Hindutva*. *Hindutva* is part and parcel of '*Moditva*'.

(³²) Akeel Bilgrami, 'Notes toward the Definition of "Identity"', *Daedalus*, vol. 135, no. 4, 'On Identity' (Fall, 2006), p. 5.

(³³) Bilgrami, 'Notes toward the Definition of "Identity"', p. 10.

(³⁴) Malavika Menon, 'The Indian State and the Minority's Right to Culture', in *Becoming Minority: How Discourses and Policies Produce Minorities in Europe and India*, edited by Jyotirmaya Tripathy and Sudarsan Padmanabhan (New Delhi: Sage, 2014), pp. 273–92.

(³⁵) Arpita Anant, 'Identities and Rights: A Case for Theory beyond the Nation-State', in *Interdisciplinary Perspectives in Political Theory*, edited by Mangesh Kulkarni (New Delhi: Sage, 2011), pp. 87–116.

(³⁶) *Social, Economic and Educational Status of the Muslim Community of India: A Report* (New Delhi: Government of India, 2006), p. 11.

(³⁷) Sachar Committee Report, p. 237.

(³⁸) The *ulama* is a body of Muslim scholars who are recognized as having specialist knowledge of Islamic sacred law and theology.

(³⁹) *Ijtihad* may be defined as the exercising of discretionary judgment to deduce a law or rule of conduct which is not self-evident in the scriptural sources.

(⁴⁰) See Maulana Wahiduddin Khan, *Indian Muslims: The Need for a Positive Outlook* (New Delhi: Goodword Books, 1994). Also see the news report by Ruchika Talwar, 'Haj Subsidy UnIslamic, Use That Money on Our Education, Health,' *The Missing Muslim*, Part X, *The Indian Express*, Friday, 17 November 2006.

(⁴¹) Zafar Ahmad, *Islam and Muslims in South Asia* (New Delhi: Authorspress, 2000), p. v.

(⁴²) Ahmad, *Islam and Muslims in South Asia*.

(⁴³) Gurpreet Mahajan, *The Multicultural Path: Issues of Diversity and Discrimination in Democracy* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2002), pp. 57–8.

(⁴⁴) Dipankar Gupta, *Mistaken Modernity: India between Worlds* (New Delhi: Harper Collins, 2000), p. 199.

(⁴⁵) T.K. Oommen, *Crisis and Contention in Indian Society* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2005), p. 118. A detailed analysis of the resurgence of Hindutva in Gujarat since the riots in the mid-1980s along with the formation of a continuum from the riots of 1969 to 2002 has been dealt with by Ornit Shani in *Communalism, Caste and Hindu Nationalism: The Violence in Gujarat* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

(⁴⁶) Anjan Ghosh, 'Will to Hate: Gujarat and the Violence of Identity', in *Democracy, Pluralism and Conflict*, edited by M.N. Karna (Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 2006), p. 210.

(⁴⁷) For a detailed analysis of the Gujarat genocide, see Radhika Desai, 'Hindutva's Gujarat: The Image of India's Future?', in *Slouching towards Ayodhya* (New Delhi: Three Essays Collective, 2002); Ghanshyam Shah, 'Caste, Hindutva and Hideousness', *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 37, no. 15 (13 April 2002); Siddhartha Varadarajan, ed., *Gujarat: The Making of a Tragedy* (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2002); Ram Puniyani, 'Hindutva's Foot Soldiers: Dalits, Adivasis?', in *Communal Violence and Minorities*, edited by Lancy Lobo and Biswaroop Das (New Delhi: Rawat Publications, 2006); Ghanshyam Shah, 'Communalization and Participation of Dalits in Gujarat 2002 Riots', in *Communal Violence and Minorities*, edited by Lancy Lobo and Biswaroop Das (New Delhi: Rawat Publications, 2006).

(⁴⁸) The term 'communal fascism' was innovatively coined by Amartya Sen in his lecture on 'The Idea of India', Lecture No. 16, Trinity College Cambridge, 5 February 1993.

(⁴⁹) Aseema Sinha, *The Regional Roots of Developmental Politics in India: A Divided Leviathan* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), p. 177.

(⁵⁰) Ernesto Laclau, 'Fascism and Ideology', in his *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory: Capitalism, Fascism, Populism* (London: Verso, 1979), p. 115.

(⁵¹) Laclau, 'Fascism and Ideology', p. 124.

(⁵²) Dipankar Gupta, 'Secularization and Minoritization: The Limits of Heroic Thought,' in *Minority Identities and the Nation-State*, edited by D.L. Seth and Gurpreet Mahajan (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 39.

(⁵³) For a detailed analysis of this issue of the relationship between Hindutva politics, neoliberal economic policies, consumerism, and the aspirations of the Indian elites, see Aijaz Ahmad, *On Communalism and Globalisation: Offensives of the Far Right* (New Delhi: Three Essays Collective, 2002); Prabhat Patnaik, 'Of Finance and Fascism', in *Communalism, Civil Society and the State: Reflections On a Decade of Turbulence*, edited by K.N. Panikkar and Sukumar Muralidharan (New Delhi: SAHMAT, 2003), pp. 75–87.

(⁵⁴) V.D. Savarkar, *Hindutva* (New Delhi: Hindi Sahitya Sadan, 2017 [1923]), p. 19.

(⁵⁵) Savarkar, *Hindutva*, pp. 28–9.

(⁵⁶) Savarkar, *Hindutva*, p. 26.

⁽⁵⁷⁾ See Sayyid Abul A'la Maududi, *Nationalism and India* (Delhi: Markazi Maktaba Islami, 1993). Initially, this pamphlet was written by Maududi in Urdu as *Mas'ala-e Qawmiyat* (The Problem of Nationalism, Lahore: 1939), and was translated in part into English as *Nationalism and India*, first published from Delhi in 1965. It was also published as part of Maududi's *Tahrik-e Azadi-e Hind aur Musalman*, 2 vols (Freedom Movement in India and the Muslims, Lahore: 1964); also see Sayyid Abul A'la Maududi, *Nations Rise and Fall Why?* (New Delhi: Markazi Maktaba Islami, 2001). This is the English translation of *Bana'o aur Bigar* (Lahore: 1947), a speech delivered by Maududi at a public meeting in Dar-ul-Islam near Pathankot (East Punjab) on 10 May 1947. For a brief analysis of Maududi's interventions in the partition debates with his narratives about Indian and world history see my essay, 'Umma and the Dilemma of Muslim Belonging in Modern South Asia', *St. Antony's International Review*, vol. 12, no. 2 (2017), pp. 26–43.

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⁽⁵⁹⁾ Thomas Blom Hansen, *The Saffron Wave: Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999), p. 79.

⁽⁶⁰⁾ All quotes are from Hansen, *Saffron Wave*, p. 78.

⁽⁶¹⁾ Hansen, *Saffron Wave*, p. 11.

⁽⁶²⁾ Hansen, *Saffron Wave*, p. 19.

⁽⁶³⁾ Hansen, *Saffron Wave*, p. 83.

⁽⁶⁴⁾ Hansen, *Saffron Wave*, p. 81.

⁽⁶⁵⁾ Hansen, *Saffron Wave*, p. 82.

⁽⁶⁶⁾ Hansen, *Saffron Wave*, pp. 83–4.

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- (⁷¹) Hansen, *Saffron Wave*, p. 84.
- (⁷²) Hansen, *Saffron Wave*, p. 85.
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(¹⁰²) 'In an article in the latest issue of the Shiv Sena's mouthpiece *Saamna*, [Sanjay] Raut compared All India Majlis-e-Ittihadul-Muslimeen (AIMIM) leaders Asaduddin and Akbaruddin Owaisi to "poisonous snakes" who "exploit" the Muslim minority. The Rajya Sabha member [Raut] endorsed a call by late Shiv Sena chief Bal Thackeray, popularly known as Balasaheb, to revoke the voting rights of Muslims' ('Sanjay Raut Says Revoke Muslims' Voting Rights, Faces Flak', *Hindustan Times*, 13 April 2015, available at <http://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/revoke-voting-rights-of-muslims-says-shiv-sena-leader-sanjay-raut/article1-1336460.aspx>, accessed on 27 May 2015).

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(¹¹³) Nalini Rajan, *Democracy and the Limits of Minority Rights* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2002), p. 117.

(¹¹⁴) Partha Chatterjee, *Lineages of Political Society* (Ranikhet: Permanent Black, 2011), p. 199.

(¹¹⁵) Chatterjee, *Lineages of Political Society*, p. 199.

(¹¹⁶) Chatterjee, *Lineages of Political Society*, p. 199.

(¹¹⁷) Here, I must emphasize that while pointing out an absence of progressives among Indian Muslims, I am talking about the absence in terms of significantly visible political activities in the form of an articulatory practice, which raises secular-democratic demands of socio-economic and political nature than merely identitarian issues. Also, it is acknowledged in Chapter 4 that a minority among the Muslims in India is trying its best for such a progressive political articulation. Where I have used the terms 'progressives' and 'Indian Muslims' together I am situating the progressives among the Indian Muslims and within the broad category of progressives, including the organized left, while Indian Muslims are largely defined as a moderately religious and socio-economically backward and politically marginalized group. In the Indian context, by progressives I mean those persons, individuals, political groups, and social organizations who believe in the universal ideas of freedom and equality, champion the democratic principles enshrined in the Indian Constitution, and strive to deepen the constitutional values with a vision for struggling against the unequal socio-economic and political world. In other words, the concept of Indian Muslim(s) is used as an identity group that is still to become a decisive political agency in fighting neoliberal capitalism while the progressives are already playing the role of a political agency with a vision to fight parochialism, casteism, patriarchy, and neoliberalism in addition to their potential to transcend neoliberal capitalism.

(¹¹⁸) Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, 'Preface' to the second edition of *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (London: Verso, 2001 [1985]), p. xviii.

(¹¹⁹) Stephen Resnick and Richard Wolff, 'Radical Economics: A Tradition of Theoretical Differences', in *Radical Economics*, edited by Bruce Roberts and Susan Feiner (Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1991), pp. 16–17.

(¹²⁰) Works that deserve special mention in this case are the following pioneering studies of Imtiaz Ahmad: *Caste and Social Stratification among Muslims in India* (Delhi: Manohar, 1973; as editor); *Family, Kinship and Marriage among Muslims in India* (Delhi: Manohar, 1976, as editor); *Ritual and Religion among Muslims in India* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1981); *Modernisation and Social Change among Muslims in India* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1983); *Divorce and Remarriage among Muslims in India* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2003, as editor).

(¹²¹) A sampling of literature on this issue can be traced in Moin Shakir, *Politics of Muslim Minorities* (Delhi: Ajanta Publications, 1980); and G. Mugny, *The Power of Minorities* (London: Academic Press, 1982).

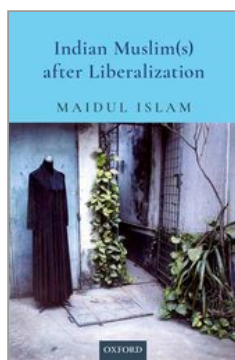
(¹²²) The post-Marxist theory of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, while strongly carrying forward the Gramscian idea of hegemony, at the same time takes the concept of discourse from Foucault apart from complementing the philosophy of language in Wittgenstein, the phenomenology of Heidegger, and Lacanian theory. See Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, pp. 10–11, 105–113. However, in this book, I have briefly used the Foucauldian concept of discourse along with taking a momentary recourse to the philosophy of Wittgenstein.

(¹²³) Laclau and Mouffe, 'Preface to the Second Edition' of *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, pp. ix–x.

(¹²⁴) Laclau and Mouffe, 'Preface to the Second Edition' of *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, p. 4.

(¹²⁵) Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, 'Post-Marxism without Apologies', in *New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time* (London: Verso, 1990), p. 130.

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Abstract and Keywords

Chapter 1 points out the socio-economic backwardness of Indian Muslims while analysing various data sets from the Census and NSSO reports, the India Human Development Report, various reports prepared by several important committees appointed by the government of India along with and other relevant literature. The chapter argues that the Muslim question had been traditionally trapped in a communal-secular binary within dominant political and academic discourses. The data provided by various sources give us ample opportunity to look into the Muslim question from the perspective of socio-economic deprivation, political under-representation, and social marginalization. The chapter also provides sufficient empirical evidence to think about the Muslim question in India as a class question along with the problems of discrimination and exclusion faced by the Indian Muslims. The chapter further elaborates on the conditions of possibility for the formation of the 'Indian Muslim' as a political identity.

Keywords: Muslim question, Census, NSSO, Indian Human Development Report, communal, secular, socio-economic deprivation, political under-representation, social marginalization, discrimination

I think that the concept of identity can be analyzed from different sides. One side would be to identify identity with a particularity. There are some difficulties obviously in this type of identification of the two categories, particularity and identity. But on the other hand there are some advantages of this identification because obviously the political problem which presents itself to politics is a problem of general articulation and general articulation has to rely on some kind of category of identity. So this is the way in which the question of identity emerges today. It can be

related to a variety of intellectual context but I think that the essential point is that it has no obvious forms of universality which can replace the notion of identity.

—Ernesto Laclau*

(p.56) This chapter primarily locates the Muslim question within the specific political context of the Indian nation-state.¹ The Muslim question is primarily linked to the construction of *such an identity*, which is intricately connected to the issue of *particularity*. In other words, *identity* can be identified with *particularity*, which can be fundamentally counterpoised with the idea of *universality*. As argued by Ernesto Laclau in the epigraph of this chapter, there are ‘no obvious forms of universality which can replace the notion of identity’.² The neoliberal policy regime in contemporary India has marked a watershed in the nation-building efforts in India. It differed greatly from the earlier Nehruvian vision, which adopted some welfarist principles in economic policies and the Non-Alignment Movement (NAM) in the realm of foreign policy.³ The process of liberalization started in the late 1970s, and gathered momentum in the 1980s, leading to the economic reforms of the 1990s.⁴ Based on such a neoliberal context, particularly after the 1990s, this chapter seeks to answer the question of whether the community identity of Muslims in contemporary India can be politically articulated in a struggle to transform group identity to a secular **(p. 57)** identification of the Muslims along the lines of socio-economic deprivation and progressive politics. The neglect of class issues involved in communal questions is a severe weakness in current scholarship. This chapter tries to venture a theoretical possibility of linking class issues and community identity, particularly with relation to Indian Muslims. First, the chapter asks a couple of questions: Can the Muslim identity also be seen from the perspective of class identity? And if one can argue a case for an overlap of Muslim identity with an *identity* of one of India’s poorest sections, or if the Indian Muslims can be empirically identified as a deprived socio-economic group, then why have the class dimensions or the issues of socio-economic deprivation of Indian Muslims not been prominently articulated in the post-colonial political discourses? In this regard, the question of (Muslim) *identity* as a form of *particularity* needs to be located within the universal category of the *people*.

Debating the Muslim Question in India: Religious Minority or Socio-economically Deprived Group?

The Sachar Committee Report observed that with regard to education, poverty, income, and employment statistics, the Indian Muslims, along with Dalits and Adivasis, were comparably more deprived than other religious communities.⁵ Many studies predating the Sachar Committee Report, have already shown that Indian Muslims are a socio-economically and educationally ‘backward community’.⁶ The socio-economic **(p.58)** and educational backwardness of Muslims, Dalits, and Adivasis were noticed during the pre-liberalization period

as well.⁷ Therefore, liberalization has not fundamentally changed the overall socio-economic and educational situation of Indian Muslims. In fact, sharp inequalities concerning income distribution can be noticed between marginalized groups such as Dalits, tribals, and Muslims and the rest of the Indian population during the phase of economic liberalization.

A decade ago, a central government-appointed expert committee had reported that Muslims along with Dalits and Adivasis formed one of the most impoverished communities in India and poverty continued to be consistently high among Muslims during the phase of economic reforms.⁸ According to this report, 84.5 per cent of Indian Muslim households spend no more than INR 20 per day and INR 609 per month and belong to the 'extremely poor', 'poor', 'marginal', and 'vulnerable' sections of the Indian population. If we also take into account the 'middle income' group as per the parameters set up by the above report, then 13.3 per cent of Indian Muslim households spend only INR 1,098 per month or INR 37 as daily per capita consumption expenditure (DPCE), which is low given the high persistence of inflation in the economy. Only 2.2 per cent of Indian Muslims, who are regarded as a high-income category by the report, spend INR 2,776 per month or INR 93 per day.⁹ It is difficult to argue that Indian Muslims are an economically heterogeneous community when only a meagre 2.2 per cent of them belong to the high-income category. The above report also shows that there is high concentration of Muslim, SC, and ST workers in the unorganized sector.¹⁰ Evaluation made post the Sachar Committee Report regarding the status of Muslim minorities (p.59) did not show any significant signs of improvement when compared to the socio-economic conditions of other religious communities.¹¹ The latest Census Report of 2011 and the 71st Round of NSSO data also highlight the socio-economic backwardness of SCs, STs, and Muslim minorities in many respects, particularly in matters of literacy and mean year of schooling (see Tables 1.1–1.6).

Table 1.1 Literacy Rate among Religious Communities, SCs, and STs

| | Male | Female | Total |
|-----------|------|--------|-------|
| India | 75.3 | 53.7 | 64.8 |
| Hindu | 76.2 | 53.2 | 65.1 |
| Muslim | 67.6 | 50.1 | 59.1 |
| Christian | 84.4 | 76.2 | 80.3 |
| Sikh | 75.2 | 63.1 | 69.4 |
| Buddhist | 83.1 | 61.7 | 72.7 |
| Others | 60.8 | 33.2 | 47.0 |

| | Male | Female | Total |
|-----------------------|------|--------|-------|
| Scheduled Castes (SC) | 66.6 | 41.9 | 54.7 |
| Scheduled Tribes (ST) | 59.2 | 34.8 | 47.1 |

Source: Census 2011.

Table 1.2 Literacy Rate of Social Groups

| Social Groups | Rural | Urban | All India |
|---------------|-------|-------|-----------|
| STs | 64.21 | 83.29 | 66.44 |
| SCs | 65.69 | 79.42 | 68.84 |
| OBCs | 71.79 | 85.75 | 75.70 |
| All Muslims | 69.15 | 79.49 | 72.95 |
| Others | 83.00 | 93.18 | 87.55 |
| Total | 71.26 | 86.17 | 75.80 |

Source: Computed from unit level data; 71st Round, 2014-15.

Table 1.3 Mean Years of Schooling

| Social Groups | Mean years of schooling for those 25 and above |
|---------------|--|
| STs | 3.6 |
| SCs | 4.0 |
| OBCs | 5.3 |
| All Muslims | 4.3 |
| Others | 8.2 |
| All India | 5.5 |

Source: Computed from NSSO, 71st round unit-level data, 2014-15.

Table 1.4 Mean Years of Schooling: Rural and Urban

| Social Groups | Rural | Urban | All India |
|---------------|-------|-------|-----------|
| STs | 3.1 | 7.4 | 3.6 |
| SCs | 3.3 | 6.1 | 4.0 |
| OBCs | 4.4 | 7.5 | 5.3 |
| All Muslims | 3.4 | 5.7 | 4.3 |
| Others | 6.3 | 10.3 | 8.2 |

| Social Groups | Rural | Urban | All India |
|---------------|-------|-------|-----------|
| Total | 4.3 | 8.1 | 5.5 |

Source: Computed from NSSO, 71st round unit-level data, 2014-15.

Table 1.5 Mean Years of Schooling (Boys)

| Social Groups | Rural | Urban | All India |
|---------------|-------|-------|-----------|
| STs | 4.1 | 8.6 | 4.6 |
| SCs | 4.5 | 7.2 | 5.2 |
| OBCs | 5.8 | 8.7 | 6.7 |
| All Muslims | 4.3 | 6.6 | 5.2 |
| Others | 7.7 | 11.2 | 9.3 |
| Total | 5.5 | 9.1 | 6.7 |

Source: Computed from NSSO, 71st round unit-level data, 2014-15.

Table 1.6 Mean Years of Schooling (Girls)

| Social Groups | Rural | Urban | All India |
|---------------|-------|-------|-----------|
| STs | 2.1 | 6.2 | 2.6 |
| SCs | 2.2 | 4.9 | 2.9 |
| OBCs | 3.0 | 6.4 | 4.0 |
| All Muslims | 2.5 | 4.7 | 3.3 |
| Others | 5.0 | 9.4 | 7.0 |
| Total | 3.1 | 7.0 | 4.3 |

Source: Computed from NSSO, 71st round unit-level data, 2014-15.

After being confronted by such facts, there is a need to seriously introspect on our perception of the profile of an 'Indian Muslim' (p.60) and whether the community is as heterogeneous in socio-economic terms as we want to believe. However, there is the empirically rich study of Sanjeer Alam, based on national-level data and fieldwork carried out in a relatively backward state such as Bihar, which suggests that Muslims should not be seen as a homogenous socio-cultural group as socio-economic backwardness and educational attainments are dependent on (p.61) spatial locations.¹² In this regard, he poses a pertinent question, 'rather than positing religious groups—Hindus and/or Muslims—as undifferentiated analytical categories, we need to ask which strata (of the

communities) and which locations are being interrogated in terms of religious influences on various attributes including educational attainment, rather than advancing metanarratives or blue prints of religious essentialism'.¹³

While acknowledging such intra-group differences within the Muslim community and recognizing the heterogeneity of the Indian Muslims, one could argue that Muslims in India are at least homogeneous in two respects. First, it is widely acknowledged by various academic studies and government agencies that Indian Muslims are **(p.62)** relatively more socio-economically deprived than other religious communities. In this respect, the caveat, which is evident even in the 2011 Census data on religion and the latest 71st NSSO reports, is that the relative deprivation of Muslims could be compared with other religious groups across regions. It is true that on some issues, Muslims in south and west India display better socio-economic indicators than Muslims in east and north India. However, when compared with non-Muslims in both west and south India, Muslims lag behind on many counts. Therefore, the question is, if deprivation has been a reality for Indian Muslims in the post-colonial scene and if such deprivation is continuing even in an era of liberalization, then why is a prominent political articulation for ameliorating their deprived status not visible both within the Muslim community and within the secular and progressive politics in the country? In other words, if there are intra-group differences among Dalits and Adivasis, why have the Dalits and Adivasis, unlike Muslims, been mainly identified as a deprived and marginalized group within the political discourse of the country? In contrast, Muslims are not specifically identified as a deprived community. Instead, the Muslim question is articulated more in relation to identity issues, minority cultural rights, and issues of secularism and communalism. Here, I am not trying to suggest that the issues of communalism are not essential. Indeed, from the early 1990s, Indian democracy has been under the threat of 'communal fascism', to use Amartya Sen's innovative phrase.¹⁴ In the midst of a crisis of secularism in contemporary India, even those who want to defend the rights of religious minorities by thinking beyond secularism argue in favour of 'democratic equality' by rethinking how the Indian nation-state practises secularism.¹⁵ It is well known in the discursive theoretical tradition that political discourse is constructed by political subjects and political agents out of available options. In the case of Indian Muslims, the political agents are none other than the Muslim political parties in India. In this respect, Chapter 4 will demonstrate that the available political agents have not been able to articulate the **(p.63)** Muslim question regarding deprivation, exclusion, and marginalization. The second respect in which Indian Muslims may be considered homogenous like the SCs and STs is that in an era of liberalization they still lack control over major means of production. Therefore, relative deprivation and lack of ownership of major means of production are the two parameters based on which Indian Muslims can be considered to be relatively more homogenous, and these two circumstances could create conditions for the possibility of a

progressive political articulation among Indian Muslims as well. Chapter 4 and the Epilogue of this book will discuss those issues.

Today, Indian Muslims, by and large, neither own the major means of production nor control the policy-making decisions of the state. However, some exceptions constitute a little over 2 per cent high-income Muslim elites in India.¹⁶ When comparing the Forbes rich lists from various years of 2013, 2016, and 2017, we find that only 4–5 per cent among the top 100 richest persons in India are Muslims (see Table 1.7).

Table 1.7 Percentage of Muslims among 100 Richest Persons in India

| Muslim Percentage in Census 2011 | Percentage of Muslims among the Richest 100 Indians in 2013 (Forbes List: 2013) | Percentage of Muslims among the Richest 100 Indians in 2016 (Forbes List: 2016) | Percentage of Muslims among the Richest 100 Indians in 2017 (Forbes List: 2017) |
|----------------------------------|---|---|---|
| 14.2 | 5 | 5 | 4 |

Source: Forbes list of the richest Indians, various years.

According to the Forbes list of India's richest individuals published in October 2013, only 5 Muslims have a place in the top 100 richest persons in India. They are Azim Premji, Wipro chairman, (rank 4), Yusuf Hamied, Cipla chairman (rank 28), M.A. Yusuff Ali (rank 40, NRI businessman from Kerala), Irfan Razack, managing director of Abu Dhabi-based Lulu Group International, which owns a fast-growing retail chain and has investments in Catholic Syrian Bank and Federal Bank in Kerala (Rank 88), Habil Khorakiwala, managing director of Bangalore-based property developers Prestige Group and (p.64) chairman of Wockhardt (rank 89). In the 2016 Forbes rich list, the number was still five and included Azad Moopen (Rank 97), physician and chairman of Dubai-based Aster DM Healthcare group. However, in the 2017 Forbes rich list, only 4 Muslims found a place in the top 100 wealthiest persons in India: Azim Premji (rank 2), M.A. Yusuff Ali (rank 27), Yusuf Hamied (rank 60), and Shamsheer Vayalil, Abu Dhabi-based VPS Healthcare chief (rank 94). One can also add the names of the Ansari family, which is the only Muslim owner of a major newspaper in the country, *Mid-Day*, and B.S. Abdur Rahman, a Tamil Muslim who is currently the vice-chairman of the Dubai-based ETA Star Group and has significant investments in real estate, maritime, and urban infrastructure in Tamil Nadu.¹⁷ One can also add the names of a few Muslim businessmen such as Badruddin Ajmal, who backs the All India United Democratic Front in Assam, and a few Kerala-based Muslim entrepreneurs who have benefited from the Gulf economy and 'have adopted the business and labour practices of global capitalism'.¹⁸ Similarly, Bollywood superstars such as Shah Rukh Khan (the founder of Red

Chillies Entertainment), Aamir Khan, and Salman Khan along with several notable Muslims in the Bollywood fraternity and sports personalities from Muslim family backgrounds belong to the strata of upper-class elite Indian Muslims. There are also several traditional Muslim merchants and traders in many small towns of India.¹⁹

(p.65) If one considers the Forbes India rich list then out of the five Muslims in the 2016 list, three—M.A. Yusuff Ali, Azad Moopen, and Shamsheer Vayalil—are Gulf-based and made their fortunes mainly outside India. Similarly, if one considers the 2017 Forbes rich list, out of four, two have made their fortunes outside India. The rest among the prominent Muslim entrepreneurs who have been successful in the last few decades in India seem to be coming from the medium-sized capitalist families of Gujarati Muslims including Azim Premji (a Khoja Muslim), Habil Khorakiwala (a Dawoodi Bohra Muslim), and Yusuf Hamied (a Kutchchi Muslim). As Aakar Patel notes:

Because few Indian Muslims are converted from trading castes, they are not particularly good at business.... The Indian exception is the Shia from Gujarat. Though it is a tiny community, perhaps no more than a half a million people, it totally dominates India's other 160 million Muslims in matters of business. So it isn't so much religion that makes a difference so far as the ability to trade is concerned, but the linguistic community an Indian belongs to, and his caste.... There are also Sunni businessmen in India, but few. The dominant community here is again Gujarati, like the Memons of Kutchch, who do business around the world. Bollywood's Muslim producers also tend to be Gujarati, like the Nadiawalas... I can only think of one non-Gujarati Sunni industrialist of some scale and that is Hakim Abdul Hameed of Hamdard.²⁰

In other words, there is little evidence to suggest that the neoliberal regime in India has directly helped a prominent capitalist class among Indian Muslims. In fact, mercantile caste background in some cases and the specific geographical location in a Muslim majority country like the United Arab Emirates in the Gulf region have served a few Muslim entrepreneurs well instead of a so-called promise of open competition in a neoliberal regime.

There is no denying the fact that Muslims are grossly under-represented amongst India's capitalist elite. Out of 1,365 member companies constituting the Indian Merchants' Chamber of Bombay in the 1980s, Muslims owned some 4 per cent, and in 1988, no Muslim-owned company featured in the top 100 corporate companies. Of the 2,832 **(p.66)** industrial units listed for monitoring in the 1990s by the Centre for Monitoring the Indian Economy, only 4 (0.14 per cent) were owned by Muslims. Despite the entry of new entrepreneurs, including Muslim women, and the fact that Muslims head some of the most successful and dynamic IT corporates, these are still exceptions that prove the rule.²¹ One

survey found just over 1 per cent of corporate executives to be Muslims.²² Such a situation did not change drastically even during the period of the economic reforms after 1991. A glimpse of the composition of the board of directors of Indian companies listed on the national stock exchange shows the negligible proportion of Muslim board members among the corporate class in India. Similarly, an empirical study of the caste diversity of Indian corporate boards of the 1,000 top Indian companies—accounting for 80 per cent of market capitalization of all companies listed in the major stock indices in India—shows that Indian corporate boards continue to remain ‘old boys’ clubs’ based on caste affiliation rather than any other considerations (like merit or experience).²³ The same study shows that an overwhelming majority (92.6 per cent) of Indian corporate board members are ‘forward castes’ comprising of Brahmins (44.6 per cent), Vaishyas (46 per cent), Kshatriyas (0.5 per cent), and Syrian Christians (1.5 per cent). On the other hand, OBCs and SCs/STs account for a mere 3.8 per cent and 3.5 per cent respectively of the total number of Indian corporate board members.²⁴ In print and **(p.67)** electronic media as well there has been a lack of presence of Dalits, Adivasis, and Muslims. The survey conducted on a social profile of 315 key decision-makers among 37 Hindi and English newspapers and television channels in the national capital showed that there was not even a single Dalit or Adivasi among the top decision-makers in the media and that there was gross under-representation of women and Muslims.²⁵ In the software industry, which has been booming in the period of neoliberal economic reforms, Muslims are severely under-represented. In 2009, less than 1 per cent of the top managers at Tata Consultancy Services were Muslims, and in 2012, only 2.5 per cent of the top managers at Wipro were Muslims; Infosys and HCL did not have a single Muslim manager.²⁶

In south India, the socio-economic situation of Muslims is relatively better off than the Muslims in north India for three reasons. First, the Partition and the flight of Muslim elite to Pakistan had little effect on the Muslims in south India. Second, large sections of Muslims in the southern states are classified as OBCs right from the colonial period. In a post-colonial situation, they were able to benefit from reservation in the education sector and job markets as they were registered in the OBC lists and also due to the presence of a strong OBC movement in south India. Finally, the oil boom of the 1970s also encouraged the Muslims of south India (mainly from Hyderabad, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu) to migrate to West Asian countries for better jobs.²⁷ Later, the overseas money earned by some prominent businessmen from the Gulf **(p.68)** economy was used to establish several educational institutions and fund colleges and medical facilities for the Muslim community.²⁸

On the other hand, the presence of big landlords among Indian Muslims is also rare. The Partition led to the migration of Muslim elites to the then West and East Pakistan, leaving behind the majority of poor Indian Muslims.²⁹ There is also a higher degree of landlessness among Muslims than any other social

groups.³⁰ Muslims are second to Dalits in small landholding.³¹ This landholding pattern is not new but has been continuing for the last two decades. As experts as Razzack and Gumber argue, Indian Muslims lack access to productive assets, land, in particular, employment, and wage stability, when compared with major religious communities and to the national average.³² Increasing landlessness among Muslims in an age of economic reforms is also highlighted in Rowena Robinson's argument:

The 1990's is a period of the further marginalization of Muslims in terms of access to land. In 1987-88 (NSSO 43rd Round), 40 per cent of rural Muslim households cultivated little or no land, compared to 34 per cent among Hindus. By 1999-2000 (NSSO 55th Round), the proportion of households so adversely affected had risen in both religious groups, but more so among the minority community: 51 per cent of Muslims and 40 per cent among the Hindus.³³

(p.69) The state-enforced abolition of zamindari in the 1950s obliterated even the minuscule number of Ashraf elites: the absentee landowning class formed by few traditional aristocratic Muslim families. Only a minority among the educated landowning elite, such as a few in Hyderabad, Mysore, and Uttar Pradesh, could remain near the seats of power and obtain employment and new status, often by strong control over their land through renting and letting. Even if there are few Muslim landlords, the 'ascendancy in the relative power of the corporate capitalist class compared to the landed elites'³⁴ in a neoliberal regime has weakened the latter's influence on major macro-level policy-making. If cultivation and landholding still decides economic status or if it is a parameter for judging prosperity in rural India, then Muslims remain at a disadvantage. Indian Muslims are relatively more concentrated in urban sectors. However, in large parts of north and east India stretching throughout the Indo-Gangetic plains, particularly in states such as Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Bengal, and Assam, Muslims constitute a significant portion of the total rural population. When the Sachar Committee Report was published, 64.25 per cent of Indian Muslims lived in rural areas (see Table 1.8).

Table 1.8 Rural Population of Religious Groups (2001)

| Religious Communities | Rural Population in Relation to Total Community Population |
|-----------------------|--|
| Hindus | 73.68% |
| Muslims | 64.25% |
| Christians | 66.00% |
| Sikhs | 73.41% |

| Religious Communities | Rural Population in Relation to Total Community Population |
|-----------------------|--|
| Buddhists | 61.51% |
| Jains | 23.88% |
| Others | 90.40% |

Source: Computed from Census of India 2001.

Even though the rural population of Muslims and other prominent religious groups have dwindled, over 60 per cent of India's Muslims still live in the rural areas (see Table 1.9).

Table 1.9 Rural Population of Religious Groups (2011)

| Religious Communities | Rural Population to Total Community Population |
|-----------------------|--|
| Hindus | 70.79% |
| Muslims | 60.09% |
| Christians | 59.87% |
| Sikhs | 71.66% |
| Buddhists | 57.02% |
| Jains | 20.32% |
| Other Religions | 90.69% |
| Religion Not Stated | 57.32% |

Source: Computed from Census of India 2011.

(p.70) In this backdrop of significant Muslim presence in rural India, let us briefly situate the all-India data on Muslim landholding in the 1990s and the first and second decades of the twenty-first century. From the data of the NSS 55th Round, we can see that among Muslim households with access to land, over 51 per cent cultivate no land while for both Hindu and Christian households it is close to 40 per cent (see Table 1.10). Table 1.10 also demonstrates that Muslims in India form a relatively landless community or a community that has little access to land when compared to other religious groups and with the national average.

Table 1.10 Distribution of Households per 1,000 by Size of Land Cultivated by Major Religious Groups for Rural Areas

| Size Class of Land Cultivated | Hindus | Muslims | Christians | Sikhs | India |
|-------------------------------|--------|---------|------------|-------|-------|
| 0.00 hectare | 395 | 512 | 394 | 490 | 409 |
| 0.01–0.40 hectare | 222 | 248 | 265 | 79 | 223 |
| 0.41–1.00 hectare | 172 | 140 | 202 | 114 | 168 |
| 1.01–2.00 hectares | 117 | 60 | 105 | 123 | 112 |
| 2.01–4.00 hectares | 63 | 28 | 26 | 101 | 59 |
| 4.01 hectares and above | 31 | 12 | 9 | 93 | 30 |
| All | 1000 | 1000 | 1000 | 1000 | 1000 |

Source: NSSO 55th Round, Report No. 468, 2001.

If one considers data regarding the cultivated land (provided in Tables 1.10 and 1.11), a crucial resource in an agrarian economy, what **(p.71) (p.72)** is striking is that relatively more Muslims are landless than Hindus or Christians. In fact, landlessness has increased among Muslims with an overall increase of landlessness among other communities between 1993–4 (NSS 50th Round) and 1999–2000 (NSS 55th Round) (see Table 1.11). Tables 1.11 and 1.12 also show that by the 1990s, large landholding (with more than 4 hectares) among Muslims have become rare and almost negligible.

Table 1.11 Number (per 1,000) of Households Reporting Land Cultivated by Major Religious Groups

| Land cultivated | 1993-4 (NSS 50th Round) | | | | 1999-2000 (NSS 55th Round) | | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|--------|---------|------------|----------------------------|--------|---------|------------|
| | India | Hindus | Muslims | Christians | India | Hindus | Muslims | Christians |
| 0.00 hectare | 387 | 369 | 490 | 514 | 409 | 395 | 512 | 394 |
| 0.01-1.00 hectare | 359 | 364 | 362 | 345 | 391 | 394 | 388 | 467 |
| 4.01 hectares or more | 43 | 46 | 18 | 7 | 30 | 31 | 12 | 9 |

Source: NSSO 55th Round, Report No. 468, 2001.

Christians are reported to possess the lowest average landholding (see Table 1.13). However, regarding land cultivation and reported landholding, the community has done well when compared with Muslims (see Tables 1.11 and 1.12). It means that Christians in India have small landholdings but own more land than Muslims.

Table 1.12 Percentage of Households Reporting Landholding

| India | Hindus | Muslims | Christians |
|-------|--------|---------|------------|
| 63.4 | 70 | 57 | 59 |

Source: India: Human Development Report, 1999.

Table 1.13 Average Landholding in Acres per Reporting Household

| India | Hindus | Muslims | Christians |
|-------|--------|---------|------------|
| 4.5 | 5.1 | 3.6 | 2.0 |

Source: India: Human Development Report, 1999.

Among the social groups, SCs and Muslims own relatively less land than other groups (see Tables 1.14 and 1.16). The same trend can be (p.73) witnessed in the cases of average land possession and average land cultivation (see Table 1.14). Among religious communities, the average land ownership among Muslims is the lowest (see Table 1.15).

Table 1.14 Land Ownership, Possession, and Cultivation by Social Groups (2012)

| Social Groups | Land Owned | Average Land Possessed | Average Land Cultivated |
|---------------|------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| ST | 1.94 | 1.88 | 2.60 |
| SC | 0.76 | 0.78 | 1.61 |
| OBC | 1.88 | 1.87 | 2.85 |
| Muslims | 0.95 | 0.97 | 1.85 |
| Others | 2.62 | 2.46 | 3.52 |

Source: Computed from NSS 68th Round unit-level data.

Note: Land unit converted to acres per household.

Table 1.15 Average Land Ownership by Religious Community (2013)

| Religious Community | Average Land Owned |
|---------------------|--------------------|
| Hindus | 1.24 |
| Muslims | 0.87 |
| Christians | 1.25 |
| Sikhs | 2.31 |
| Jains | 2.01 |
| Buddhists | 1.02 |
| Parsis | 0.02 |
| Others | 1.15 |

Source: Computed from NSS 70th Round unit-level data.

Note: Land unit in hectares per household.

Table 1.16 Average Land Ownership by Social Groups (2013)

| Caste | Average Land Owned |
|---------|--------------------|
| ST | 1.18 |
| SC | 0.64 |
| OBC | 1.26 |
| Muslims | 0.87 |
| Others | 1.54 |

Source: Computed from NSS 70th Round unit-level data.

Note: Land unit in hectares per household.

Thus, even a cursory glance at the living conditions of the Muslim community in India reveals the social reality of Muslims being a socio-economically marginalized community. The Muslim political elites are few, as Muslims do not provide the political leadership in the national mainstream, with gross under-representation of Muslims in various legislatures of the states and at the centre.³⁵ In the 2014 Lok Sabha (p.74) elections, Muslim members of Parliament have reduced to only 22 (4.05 per cent), an all-time low in the entire history of Indian parliamentary elections.³⁶ Even in those states where the Muslim population is much higher than the national average (for example in Assam, West Bengal, Kerala, Uttar Pradesh, and Bihar), Muslims are under-represented in the legislative assemblies. This is not to suggest that Muslims only vote for Muslims for that is not true. Muslims vote for all kinds of political parties. Even the BJP has been getting Muslim votes. In 2014, they got 8 per cent votes at the all-India level. In Hindi-speaking states, they got 11 per cent

votes and in the rest of India, they got 7 per cent votes. This has been an increase in support of 4 per cent from the 2009 Lok Sabha elections;³⁷ there have also been presidents and vice-presidents from Muslim backgrounds.

About the socio-economic and educational issues, there are the essential issues of democratization, political participation, and political empowerment of the Muslim community in India as part and parcel of the modernist project of electoral democracy offered by the post-colonial Indian state. The voting behaviour of the Indian Muslims in the recent past shows a clear pattern: wherever the BJP is strong, Muslims vote for the candidate who is the strongest opponent of the BJP candidate in a particular constituency, as we can see in north India. However, in states where the BJP is not a dominant player and the electoral game revolves around two or more prevailing secular parties, then the pertinent question arises, 'what is the nature of Muslim electoral behaviour in those states?' In this respect, an essential question is whether the Islamic and several other Muslim organizations have any role to play in shaping Muslim public opinion and influencing voting behaviour of Indian Muslims.

The under-representation of Muslims in several political institutions facilitates their further marginalization in post-independent India. However, Muslim under-representation in state legislatures and **(p.75)** Parliament is an empirical reality and there is nothing to suggest that there is *one* Muslim community and *one* kind of voting behaviour as there has never been any homogenous 'Muslim' voting behaviour as is often portrayed in popular media.³⁸ In this context of a very dismal Muslim situation, the absence of effective and viable Muslim leadership in the first place and then a lack of original thinking among the deeply divided existing Muslim leadership, which is plagued by factional feuds in the form of various *aqida* (schools of religious thought and interpretations of Shariat), only increases the precariousness of the Muslim situation. The lack of creative imagination in a section of Muslim leaders, which only criticizes everybody else except themselves, aggravates the plight of Indian Muslims. Thus, an introspective and progressive agenda of socio-economic and educational uplift of Muslims is the demand of the time so that there is overall development of the community while the cherished principles of democratic values and secular ethos are also championed. In this context, we find that the approaches of the political institutions and several political regimes have so far neglected the Muslim question at the time of policy-framing. A demand for inclusive policy-making should be formulated after placing it before the government to address the educational backwardness, discrimination, and exclusion faced by Muslims, and also Dalits and Adivasis, in the current scenario.³⁹

The socio-economic background of Indian Muslims disables them from getting individual rights and benefits due to their unorganized status as casual workers among the small and landless peasants in some parts of rural India, and as a

self-employed group in both urban and rural sectors. On the other hand, their educational backwardness hinders them from upward social mobility and stops them from **(p.76)** getting access to specific infrastructural benefits from the state.⁴⁰ This form of dual hindrances is again supplemented by the communal problem, which makes things worse for the Indian Muslims. All these reasons lead us to believe that the Muslim question in India can only be addressed from the vantage point of socio-economic deprivation albeit with some peculiarities and specificities of its own. In an overall analysis, as informed by several government reports as the Sachar and Arjun Sengupta Committee Reports on the one hand and academic literature on the other, one can hardly argue that Indian Muslims constitute a significant section of India's dominant capitalist elite or even form a significant section of the middle-class elite. Thus, Indian Muslims are *heterogeneous* in terms of language, regional affiliations, culture,⁴¹ and caste,⁴² but relatively *homogeneous* by the parameters of their socio-economic profiles (primarily concentrated in the informal sector workforce), educational backwardness, and common faith in the Islamic religion. Once foreign direct investment (FDI) in retail arrives in a significant way, it will further dampen the livelihood prospects of small traders, petty shopkeepers, petty producers, casual workers in the tobacco industry, tailors, transport workers, and artisans—the major occupational groups among Indian Muslims.⁴³

(p.77) Apart from educational backwardness, poor health infrastructure in Muslim localities, socio-economic deprivation in terms of income, employment, assets, and the lack of credit opportunities for the Muslim youth as reported by the Sachar Committee Report and other academic works, the Muslim community in India also faces several forms of discrimination. Empirical research based on surveys and interviews of Muslim ex-millworkers in present-day Mumbai reveals how the feeling of *karahiya* (an Urdu term for nausea, disgust, hate, and so on), combined with suspicion of terrorism and underworld mafia, creates barriers for employment opportunities of Muslims in the city.⁴⁴ Moreover, in Mumbai, about 70 per cent of the Muslim population feels discriminated against in the public sector while in the private sector, 18 per cent Muslims feel discriminated against. This is apart from the cases of Muslim localities being severely underserved by both private- and public-sector banks and repeated denials of loans to Muslim families by banks.⁴⁵ The fear of communal violence impedes Muslims from choosing their residence in non-Muslim localities in Mumbai. In fact, a typical pattern of exclusion and self-segregation among Muslims in Mumbai can be noticed in recent years, where the community is increasingly receding from relatively cosmopolitan housing complexes to Muslim-dominated areas because of denial of rental and ownership access.⁴⁶ Although homogenous community-dominated neighbourhoods for Muslims in Mumbai make the community relatively safer, such spaces also increase the policing of Muslim women, which makes 'a strong impact on Muslim women's capacity to engage risk in public spaces'.⁴⁷ To add to this, the spiralling property prices hinder

Muslims **(p.78)** from opting for separate flats for each family unit; thus, forcing them to reside in overcrowded rooms and houses within a joint family.⁴⁸ Even in Kolkata, a city known for its secular credentials and cosmopolitanism, Muslims are marginalized in their urban slums with limited educational and employment opportunities, and inadequate physical infrastructure in Muslim localities. The residents live in abject poverty with the added victimization of innocent Muslim youths in false cases of alleged terrorist activities.⁴⁹

In fact, in November 2013, a property-selling website advertised houses for sale and rent which specifically mentioned that Dalits and Muslims were not allowed to buy or rent those properties.⁵⁰ Moreover, a recently held academic study shows the forms of discrimination faced by Dalits and Muslims in the rental housing market in five metropolitan areas of the National Capital Region of Delhi.⁵¹ By combining three distinct methods, namely, the telephonic audit, in-person or face-to-face audit, and specific case studies, the phenomenon of discrimination and unequal outcomes for prospective Dalit and Muslim tenants in the urban rental housing market was captured. Such a study demonstrated that the prejudices of the house owners were a major reason in denying housing to both Dalits and Muslims, with Muslims experiencing greater discrimination. The study also found that Dalits and Muslims who managed to get homes on rent often had to agree to unfair terms and conditions. Thus, the social stigma and exclusion that ordinary Muslims face in contemporary India in many respects are relatively similar to the experiences of the Dalits.

The grave prejudice of the police and the media against Muslims in suspecting the members of this minority community as potential **(p.79)** terrorists remain.⁵² The over-representation of Muslims in jails⁵³ reveals a clear link between the criminal justice system and the discrimination and marginalization faced by Muslim minorities in India.⁵⁴ One can argue that this kind of over-representation of Muslims in Indian jails is a combination of two factors: (a) the state may be biased against Muslim minorities and, thus, is complicit in victimizing through criminal procedures; and (b) due to the low levels of socio-economic development, the crime rate among the Muslim community may be relatively higher.

Indian Muslims also face social exclusion, ghettoization, biased stigmatization, housing distress, and violence from both state and non-state actors not only during communal riots but also in other situations in their everyday lives.⁵⁵ Except for Kozhikode in Kerala, Muslims face almost the same kinds of problems in most Indian cities such as ghettoization due to perpetual denial of housing in non-Muslim localities, anxieties of communal violence, and poor infrastructure in Muslim localities.⁵⁶ Then there are specific problems of Muslim women who are relatively more deprived in socio-economic terms than Muslim men due to structural and institutionalized forms of inequality and discrimination.⁵⁷ Moreover, Muslim women in India face unique disadvantages, **(p.80)**

disparities, and disempowerment due to several conservative and patriarchal provisions under Muslim Personal Law.⁵⁸

Although Muslims are occupationally differentiated, an overwhelming majority of Indian Muslims are poor. Apparently, there are few exceptions such as Muslim film stars and sports personalities or such business tycoons as Azim Premji, who belong to the group of upper-class elite Indian Muslims. However, they are also seen as celebrities than as people with Muslim identities. In other words, they have a celebrity identity besides being Muslim.

The Question of Muslim Identity in Contemporary India

Generally, in the dominant stereotype, the construction of Muslim identity has been so far predicated on narrow doctrinal principles that fundamentally distinguish Muslims from others. The intensification of communal politics in the 1990s, which converged with the processes of neoliberal economic reforms, piled up more worries about the status of Indian Muslims as a minority and this particular phenomenon sharpened communal boundaries. It is now gradually being acknowledged that a defensive strategy by Indian Muslims has often led to issues of minority identity and minority affairs being confused with communal ones. So, it has often been seen in the recent past that the defence of personal laws becomes synonymous with the protection of minority rights and nothing more.⁵⁹ In this respect, the dominant discourse accepts identity as natural and innate—something that a person is born with. As Eric Hobsbawm argues, ‘Most identity groups are not based on objective physical similarities or differences, although all of them would like to claim that they are **(p.81)** “natural” rather than socially constructed.’⁶⁰ However, the fact of the matter is that ‘identities are socially constructed through cultural practices and socialisation’.⁶¹

The identity of a ‘Muslim’ in India connotes different meanings in different discursive practices. In other words, the construction of a ‘Muslim’ can be seen from various perspectives like any other identity construct. ‘Religion’ as the primary identity of a significant number of Muslims makes more sense for many if one wants to explore the socio-psychological aspects of Indian Muslims. This position of ‘prior identity’ that sees the identity of any particular religious group ‘to be politically “prior” to being an Indian’⁶² is more intellectually convincing for many than other critiques of secularism—‘non-existence’ of secularism itself, ‘Muslim favouritism’, ‘Muslim sectarianism’, and being ‘anti-modernist’ and ‘cultural’.⁶³ This book tries to locate the Muslim identity in a transitory phase of the dilemma of the Muslims in India: between acceptance and negation of modernity and modern institutions such as the Indian state. The concept of ‘Indian’ attached to the notion of the state and its territoriality and sovereignty as well as its peculiarly diverse and plural cultural practices throws up deep problematics of a limited understanding about Muslims in India. It only offers a partial picture of the Muslim community in our country. In this regard, the ‘Indian Identity’ or identity of being an ‘Indian’ needs to be problematized.

Amartya Sen's suggestion of thinking over a possible 'federal' concept of the Indian identity 'that draws on the different religious communities, perhaps even including non-religious beliefs within the list of the constituents of a "federation of cultures"'⁶⁴ needs to be ventured into in this respect. Thus, 'the consideration of collective identities in India **(p.82)** must take into account not only caste but also religion and religious pluralism'.⁶⁵

More comprehensively, the Muslim identity in India or the identity of Indian Muslims, if one prefers, can be understood by examining the nuances and complexities of a minority psyche, its anxieties and insecurities in the context of spatial territory of India—a summation that produces the minority complex among Indian Muslims on the one hand, and a simultaneous construction of an emancipatory Islamist ideology in the name of an Islamic world view on the other hand. Thus, apart from the socio-economic issues of Muslim deprivation, the socio-psychology of Indian Muslims also needs probing in order to comprehensively understand both the 'minority complex'⁶⁶ as well as the Islamic world view that seeks to unite Muslims all over the world despite the fact that like all communities intra-group differences can be noticed among Muslims on the grounds of multiple identities of caste, gender, ethnicity, and language. In fact, drawing upon the narratives of Ali Anwar (ex-MP and the leader of Pasmada Muslim Mahaz)⁶⁷ and some OBC Muslims, Tanweer Fazal argues that 'an inverted history produced by the Muslim lower castes challenges the myth of egalitarianism [in Islam] and lays stress on caste as the constitutive unit of Muslim social structure'.⁶⁸

(p.83) The *identity* of a 'Muslim Other'⁶⁹ in the Indian public discourse has been most prominently shaped by the decade-long resurgence of Hindutva. However, there are also instances of a more general pattern of development of reactive identity as a big section of Muslims, globally, today tend to think of themselves as 'the other'.⁷⁰ Admittedly this sense of 'otherness' among the Indian Muslim community itself is the result of persistent socio-economic deprivation, educational backwardness, and the assertive Hindu-nationalist politics that together create a sense of alienation and marginalization among Muslims. Concern was expressed to the Prime Minister's High Level Committee headed by Justice Rajinder Sachar over police high-handedness in dealing with Muslims as 'whenever any incident occurs, Muslim boys are picked up by the police'.⁷¹ Moreover, Muslims live with an inferiority complex as more often than not 'every bearded man is considered an ISI agent'.⁷² In this context, among a large number of Indian Muslims who are socially and economically backward in comparison with other religious compatriots, a section is sometimes captive to the metaphysical overtones in their imagination. In this regard, a return to the fundamentals of Islam not only becomes a solace for them but also makes for a robust pan-Islamic message of emancipation from human problems.

The assertive religious identity formations in the contemporary Indian scene are more rooted in the problematic dynamics of both the **(p.84)** colonial and post-colonial modernist projects that have been argued by a host of scholars. As Sudipta Kaviraj points out:

In Indian politics, the major problem appears to be the connection between modernity as a proposal for arranging social life, and what its essential, ineradicable pressures do to the configuration of identities. Modernity changes fundamentally what people are, what they think they are, and more fundamentally and elusively, their way of being what they are. Hindus and Muslims, of course, existed earlier as well; but they are Hindus and Muslims now in quite a different way, and there is a new way of being a Hindu or a Muslim.⁷³

The Hindu right-wing movements under the banner of politicized religion have often essentialized the terms and the binary oppositions of 'Hindu' and 'Muslim'.⁷⁴ It is believed that essentializing identities involve assuming that those that are given at birth or 'ascriptive identities', to use a more technical term, are the only authentic sources of identity. Authenticity is often central to the politics of identity. Identity politics thus rests on deeply problematic assumptions and understandings about cultures as internally homogeneous, timeless, and forever distinguishable from one another. Thus, both for the Hindu right and the Muslim conservatives, parcelling up two communities as solidified categories of Hindus and Muslims without locating heterogeneity, fragments, fissures, and contradictions among each of these groups promotes their political agenda because it works to separate Hindus and Muslims from the rest of Indians so as to efficiently seclude and at times selectively target 'others' in moments of communal riots. The construction of the other's identity and the contestations with the **(p.85)** 'other' could be only countered with more inter-faith dialogue that Indian secularism seeks to offer even though it often fails to attain that cherished goal. As Rajeev Bhargava argues, '[i]n a society where numerical supremacy of one religious group may predispose it to disfavour smaller religious groups, secularism was to deter the persecution of religious minorities.'⁷⁵ However, systematic killings of minorities like what happened in the Gujarat genocide not only questions but also seriously challenges the credibility of Indian secularism to deliver its fruitful gains out of its idealized visions. Hindu majoritarianism like all other forms of majoritarianism always imagines a project of homogenization by challenging the democratic principles of 'allowing space and recognition for all identities'.⁷⁶ In South Asian countries, often, a constructed majority is formed by a minority ruling elite with the help of the nation-state aiding in homogenizing its people whereby the 'minorities remain numerically insignificant and vulnerable communities struggling against the domination of the majority'.⁷⁷

In a neoliberal India which is undergoing the processes of globalization, when the socio-economic issues of Indian Muslims need serious attention, often, the Muslim question traditionally gets caught up in and around the debates on secularism and communalism. Researchers have pointed out that ‘an important factor contributing to the nature of the current debate on minority rights is the fact that the Indian state has fallen short of recognizing and actively addressing the issue of the socio-economic rights of Muslims’.⁷⁸ It is undoubtedly true that the debate over the rights of religious minorities in academic literature that emerged during the first decade of liberalization singularly focused on identitarian issues of community rights and cultural rights instead of socio-economic rights and political representation **(p.86)** of religious minorities.⁷⁹ Therefore, today, can we argue the Muslim question in India from a class perspective given the overall socio-economic and political marginalization, deprivation and backwardness of Indian Muslims? The articulation of class dimensions in addressing the Muslim question in India has so far been missing from political cum policy debates. Principally, the Muslim question in India has been trapped within the questions of *identity* and *security* and less attention is paid to the aspect of *equity* by the dominant governmental discourse of policy-making. While all the aspects of *identity*, *security*, and *equity* of Muslims are interlinked,⁸⁰ the historical experience of the post-colonial Indian state has been that of addressing the Muslim question within the ambit of a binary opposition of secular versus communal. The issues of *identity* and *security*, characterizing the secular-communal debates and autonomy of distinct religio-cultural rights (Muslim Personal Law, minority institutions, so on) have been at the centre of the major political discourses, and rarely do we find the questions of socio-economic deprivation and political marginality of Indian Muslims influencing the contours of political debates in the last seven decades of the Indian republic.

Even within progressive academia, the class issues related to the social mobility of Indian Muslims have often remain unheard. Despite its rigorous and brilliant endeavour, both the Subaltern Studies collective and Marxist scholars—regarded as the academic voice of the ‘marginalized’ and ‘oppressed’—have somehow overlooked the class aspects of the Muslim question in India. Instead, they (re)constructed theories and commentaries on communalism and secularism to carry forward the agenda of the secular project of the Indian state in tackling the issues related to the rights of Indian Muslims. This deadlock over the Muslim question in communal versus secular discourses has to be broken to carve out space for a wider perception about both politics of social justice on the one hand and distributive justice on the other. In this respect, the Muslim question might be comprehensively understood if the dominant discourse of a secular versus communal binary is substantiated by a conscious and deliberate transition within academic **(p.87)** and policy-making debates from simple communal versus secular discourses to more discussions on class dimensions related to the livelihood questions of Indian Muslims. This is, however, not to suggest that one

should altogether discard the communal versus secular issues but they must complement the class issues of Indian Muslims regarding both theoretical premise and practical policy interventions in addressing the socio-economic backwardness of India's most significant religious minority. This is because the class dimensions of Indian Muslims are by themselves *secular* and thus need to be addressed by a secular state.

Scholars working within a liberal ideological framework have either located the Muslim question in India from the vantage point of historical contexts, political institutions, governmental policies, and technologies,⁸¹ or by describing the effects of the Partition on Indian Muslims.⁸² The Muslim question in India can also be seen with a specific dynamics of its own, particularly the aspects of discrimination and exclusion along with a certain sense of minority complex within the community that makes it so different and yet so unique within the discourse on marginality. If Muslims are an economically and educationally backward community, if the Indian Muslim is a deprived, marginalized, disempowered, and excluded community, then why has the Muslim question not been significantly dealt with beyond the secular-communal debates in the post-colonial political discourses? If the socio-economic backwardness and political marginalization among Muslims are empirical realities, then why has it not produced a similar discursive terrain in the political realm? In this respect, one can argue that construction of political discourse is the result of *presence* or *absence* of a particular kind of political articulation. In the post-colonial political discourses, since the Muslim question has not been politically articulated in class terms, an absence of a dominant class-centric approach in dealing with the *community question* has culminated in this situation of the *non-availability* of a political discourse that can articulate the equity issues of Indian Muslims along class lines. **(p.88)** The *lack* of progressive Muslim leadership, the limits of secularist leadership and the failure of the left in understanding the connectivity of the Muslim community and its underlying class issues are significant factors behind the absence of a political discourse that could have articulated the Muslim question in India from a class perspective. In other words, the political leadership failed to understand the Muslim question from a class perspective along with its failure to highlight the issues of political under-representation, with equity concerns in all spheres of life as a priority, in handling the problems of Indian Muslims.

The problem of approaching the Muslim question from a class perspective is related to *identity construction* and *identification* as a process of making an identity of a community. In this regard, Laclau's observation could be useful.

Any social identity would necessarily entail, as one of its dimensions, construction, and not simply recognition. The key term for understanding this process of construction is the psychoanalytic category of *identification*, with its explicit assertion of a lack at the root of any identity: one needs to

identify with something because there is an originary and insurmountable lack of identity.⁸³

Thus, Laclau suggests that identities are formed and constructed through the process of *identification*. Laclau's observation might serve our purpose in understanding the problem of *Muslim identity* construction as a result of *identification* with the 'Muslim community' (religio-cultural identity) and not as a 'deprived disempowered group' (a secular identity based on socio-political and economic factors) both by the inside agency (Muslims themselves) and outsiders (the non-Muslims). This process of *identification* with a particular identity of a community, religion, and social group is essential for the formation and construction of the collective identity of a group—Indian Muslims. In other words, do Muslim and non-Muslim communities *identify* Indian Muslims solely as a religious group or a minority community (that is, a social group but based on numerical identity) or a socially, educationally and economically *backward* group? Individuals assert and ascertain a particular identity among several choices since all individuals have **(p.89)** multiple identities. Nevertheless, which identity an individual would choose to *identify* with depends more on the specific circumstances and contexts in which an individual is located. Furthermore, the *identification* with a particular identity is also a function of the *availability of dominant discourses* that shape the image and decisions of an individual; and by this logic it leads to the making up of a community as well. There is scarcely any doubt that the dominant discourses both within and outside the Muslim community see Muslims *only* as a distinct religio-cultural community and nothing more. In fact, in the next chapter, we will see how in popular culture Muslims have been designated and portrayed as a distinct religious minority group where Bollywood cinema has highlighted more on mythical constructions, vilifications, and stereotypical imaging without reflecting the class dimensions and the underclass identity of Indian Muslims.

However, how could this one-dimensional image of viewing Muslims as a *particular* religio-cultural community with merely a minority status be transformed *into* an identity of a poor, marginalized, deprived, excluded and backward community? Why can Muslims not say that they are not merely Muslims but 'poor'? Why can non-Muslims not *identify* Muslims as a deprived and *backward* community? In the *available* political discourses, unlike Muslims, Dalits and Adivasis and even to some extent women are more *identified* and described as 'deprived', 'backward', 'disadvantaged', or 'weaker' sections of the Indian population. This is because the leadership among the Dalits, Adivasis, and women besides the mainstream secular progressive political leadership have so far tried to understand and address the issues of Dalits, Adivasis, and women around the discourses of marginality, oppression, exploitation, deprivation, discrimination, and exclusion. However, in the case of Muslims, only secular

versus communal debates have been prominent, instead of looking at the issue from a class perspective.

There is little doubt about the overall marginalization of Indian Muslims. The series of statistical data that I have presented, appended by a considerable body of literature on Muslim backwardness, is replete with the general trend of Muslim marginalization. This literature on Muslim socio-economic backwardness is nothing but the product of various micro- and macro-level studies conducted by the progressive intelligentsia to judge the 'real' situation of Muslims in India. Available data and extant academic literature on Indian Muslims amply show **(p. 90)** that Muslims are not only poor but also doubly marginalized. A general profile of an Indian Muslim is characterized neither as that of a regular salaried white or blue collar personnel nor as a red coloured trade unionist under the banner of organized proletariat. Rather its profile is more identified with that of unorganized labour in the informal sector. As the labour force of the unorganized and informal sector, they are also denied several rights that organized labour get. The Muslim population has a limited base in the country's upper-middle and middle classes, which comprises public and private sector officials and professionals such as doctors, engineers, teachers, lawyers, journalists, accountants, and others. At the same time, Muslims can be found in lesser numbers among the workers in the formal or organized sector. There are, of course, exceptions that this chapter has already pointed out. Those are exceptions that only prove the rule. This is not to argue that empirically the Muslim middle class is non-existent. In fact, Ashutosh Varshney has recently asserted that there is a middle class among SCs, STs, and Muslims. In south and west India, there is a Muslim middle class where the effects of Partition have been minuscule, and from the 1960s onwards, there has been an emergence of a Muslim middle class in north India as well.⁸⁴ In contrast, this chapter has focused on whether there is a significant number of big capitalists and landed elites among Indian Muslims under conditions of neoliberal reforms.

In this respect, the majority of the Indian Muslims form the lower and lower-middle economic group. Therefore, Indian Muslims today form an excluded community: they are excluded from mainstream general education and employment due to the lack of affirmative action and a clear focus of governmental policy aimed specifically towards Muslims. Chapter 3 will discuss such issues of affirmative action for Muslims. In the light of the discussion in this chapter, one could argue that the Muslim question in India is not similar to that of the Dalit-Adivasi and the working class questions. It can be seen as a class question with specific dynamics of its own, particularly with aspects of discrimination and exclusion along with a certain sense of minority insecurity that makes it so different and so unique within the discourse on marginality.

Notes:

(*) Athina Avgitidou and Eleni Koukou, 'The Defender of Contingency: An Interview with Ernesto Laclau', *Intellectum*, vol. 5 (2008), pp. 85–95.

(¹) For a historical analysis of the 'Muslim question' in India, see Raziuddin Aquil, *The Muslim Question: Understanding Islam and Indian History* (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2009). In contrast, I am placing the Muslim question in the context of the modern nation-state, in the period after India became a republic and, more specifically, after the liberalization period.

(²) Athina Avgitidou and Eleni Koukou, 'The Defender of Contingency: An Interview with Ernesto Laclau', *Intellectum*, vol. 5 (2008), pp. 85–95.

(³) It is beyond the scope of this work to elaborate 'neoliberalism' in theory and practice or to highlight the distinct nature of the Indian model of neoliberalism. For elaborate discussions on Neoliberalism as theory and practice from two distinct perspectives, see David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), and Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978–79*, edited by Michel Senellart and translated by Graham Burchell (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008). For a substantive review of political thought of neoliberalism, see Daniel Stedman Jones, *Masters of the Universe: Hayek, Friedman, and the Birth of Neoliberal Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012).

(⁴) Baldev Raj Nayar, *Globalisation and Nationalism: The Changing Balance in India's Economic Policy 1950–2000* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2001); Rahul Mukherji, *Globalization and Deregulation: Ideas, Interests, and Institutional Change in India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 63–107.

(⁵) 'Social, Economic and Educational Status of the Muslim Community' prepared by the Prime Minister's High Level Committee appointed on 9 March 2005 submitted it in the last week of November 2006 and was tabled in the Parliament on 30 November 2006. The Sachar Committee was headed by Justice Rajinder Sachar and its report was popularly known as the Sachar Committee Report.

(⁶) N. Jayaram, 'Ethnicity and Education: A Socio Historical Perspective on the Educational Backwardness of Indian Muslims', *Sociological Bulletin*, vol. 39, nos 1 and 2 (March–September 1990), pp. 115–29; Abusaleh Shariff, *India: Human Development Report, a Profile of Indian States in the 1990s* (New Delhi: NCAER & Oxford University Press, 1999); Abusaleh Shariff and Mehtabul Azam, *Economic Empowerment of Muslims in India* (New Delhi: Institute of Objective Studies, 2004); Zoya Hasan and Ritu Menon, *Unequal Citizens: A Study of Muslim Women in India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004).

(⁷) Government of India, *Report of the High Power Panel on Minorities, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Weaker Sections* (New Delhi: Ministry of Home Affairs, 1983); Karuna Chanana, 'Accessing Higher Education: The Dilemma of Schooling Women, Minorities, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in Contemporary India', *Higher Education*, vol. 26, no. 1, Perspectives on Higher Education in India (July 1993), pp. 69–92.

(⁸) Arjun Sengupta, K.P. Kannan, G. Raveendran, 'India's Common People: Who Are They, How Many Are They and How Do They Live?' *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 43, no. 11 (2008), pp. 49–63.

(⁹) Sengupta, Kannan, and Raveendran, 'India's Common People', pp. 51–2.

(¹⁰) Sengupta, Kannan, and Raveendran, 'India's Common People', pp. 58–9.

(¹¹) See *Post Sachar Evaluation Committee Report* (New Delhi: Ministry of Minority Affairs, 2014). The committee was chaired by Professor Amitabh Kundu and its report is also known as the Kundu Committee Report. A post-Sachar evaluation of the socio-economic conditions of Muslims at only the state level was extensively carried out in the case of West Bengal by Association SNAP, Guidance Guild, and Pratichi Institute (*Living Reality of Muslims in West Bengal* [Kolkata: Association SNAP, Guidance Guild, and Chhonya, 2016]). Both reports suggest that the socio-economic conditions of Muslims, Scheduled Castes, and Scheduled Tribes at the national level as well as in the state of West Bengal is relatively poor in most parameters when compared to upper-caste Hindus and other religious minorities. Before these reports were published, at least in the case of access to education and particularly with access to schooling, another government-appointed committee report demonstrated that the education system is unfairly tilted against Muslims, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and women. See *Report of the Expert Group on Diversity Index* submitted to Ministry of Minority Affairs, Government of India, 2008.

(¹²) Mohd. Sanjeer Alam, *Religion, Community, and Education: The Case of Rural Bihar* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2012).

(¹³) Alam, *Religion, Community, and Education*, p. 179.

(¹⁴) Amartya Sen, 'The Idea of India', Lecture No. 16, Trinity College Cambridge, 5 February 1993.

(¹⁵) Neera Chandhoke, 'Re-presenting the Secular Agenda for India', in *Will Secular India Survive?* edited by Mushirul Hasan (New Delhi: ImprintOne, 2004), pp. 50–71.

(¹⁶) Sengupta, Kannan, and Raveendran, 'India's Common People', pp. 51–2.

⁽¹⁷⁾ For some successful business companies owned by Muslims, see Harish Damodaran, *India's New Capitalists: Caste, Business, and Industry in a Modern Nation* (Delhi: Permanent Black and New India Foundation, 2008), pp. 302–6.

⁽¹⁸⁾ Filippo Osella and Caroline Osella, 'Muslim Entrepreneurs between Indian and the Gulf', *ISIM Review*, no. 19 (Spring 2007), pp. 8–9; Filippo Osella and Caroline Osella, 'Muslim Entrepreneurs in Public Life between India and the Gulf: Making Good and Doing Good', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, vol. 15, supplement 1, Special Issue, Islam, Politics, Anthropology (May 2009), pp. 202–21.

⁽¹⁹⁾ Mattison Mines, *Muslim Merchants: The Economic Behaviour of an Indian Muslim Community* (New Delhi: Shri Ram Centre for Industrial Relations and Human Resources, 1972); S.M. Akram Rizvi, 'Kinship and Industry among Muslim Karkhanders in New Delhi', in *Family Kinship and Marriage among Muslims in India*, edited by Imtiaz Ahmad (New Delhi: Manohar, 1976); Elizabeth A. Mann, *Boundaries and Identities: Muslims, Work and Status in Aligarh* (New Delhi: Sage, 1992); Omar Khalidi, *Muslims in Indian Economy* (Delhi: Three Essays Collective, 2006); Asghar Ali Engineer, 'Muslim Middle Class and Its Role', *Secular Perspective* (16–31 May 2001).

⁽²⁰⁾ Aakar Patel, 'The Muslim Businessmen of India', *DNA* (16 May 2010).

⁽²¹⁾ Barbara Harris-White, *India Working: Essays on Society and Economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 142–3.

⁽²²⁾ S. Goyal, 'Social Background of Indian Corporate Executives', in *Dominance and State Power in Modern India*, vol. II, edited by Francine R. Frankel and M.S.A. Rao (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 535–44.

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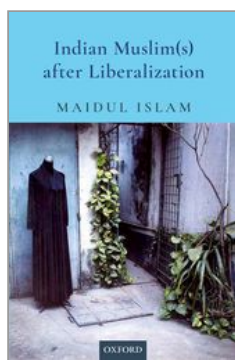
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Imag(in)ing Indian Muslims in Post-liberalization Hindi Cinema

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Abstract and Keywords

This chapter depicts the nature of image constructions of Indian Muslims by the ideological state apparatus of popular Bollywood cinema. It argues that a constant process of vilification of Muslims in Hindi cinema has produced the image of a 'Muslim Other', which is contradictory to the image of a law-abiding citizen. Such a cultural process of homogenization via a stereotyped image of Muslims in Hindi movies creates a suspicious mind-set towards Muslims. This chapter argues that the mythical imagination about Muslims as represented in popular Hindi cinema has labelled certain cultural fixations of the Muslim community. In effect, Hindi cinema has been continuously propagating a stereotyped model of Muslims in both foreign territories and different parts of the country. This chapter shows that Bollywood films have not significantly dealt with the livelihood problems of Indian Muslims arising out of the economic and educational backwardness of the community.

Keywords: Muslim Other, Bollywood, popular cinema, vilification, state apparatus, stereotype, suspicious mind-set

The cinematic apparatus, i.e. the combination of image and spectator was, consciously or unconsciously, figured as a microcosm of the future nation-state. Thus, from the outset, cinema in India was a political issue. The screen was a political site, not by nature, but because the situation compelled the film-maker to define it as such.

—M. Madhava Prasad*

The biggest problem today, therefore, before our cinema appears to be the bourgeoisie who rule the country, as well as the cinema. After the bombshell of *Garam Hawa*, Sathyu is still to make another Hindi film. In their factory in Bombay, they make films as a factory makes soap and sells it, wholesale or retail. The masses want them that way, they say. In reality **(p.92)** they have manipulated the masses to a state of cultural prostration. They have exploited the vacuum left by imperialists and turned the full force of their propaganda machine to reduce the people to a state of cultural bankruptcy. I have a feeling that films mass-produced in Bombay have the same object in view as the linguistic outrages of the ruling classes of India. It is not just a prank or merely a ploy for profits. It is a kind of cultural imperialism, a juggernaut designed to crush the individuality and distinctiveness of the various nations' cultures of this country.

—Utpal Dutt[†]

(p.93) In the previous chapter we have seen how the contemporary Muslim situation in India shows a dismal picture of economic deprivation, social marginalization, and spatial ghettoization of India's largest religious minorities. However, the communal stereotypes of Indian Muslims are more readily seen and heard of at the cost of coverage of the economic and educational backwardness of the community. The communal characterization and representation of Indian Muslims are fundamentally related to the 'othering' project of mainstream media in order to produce, mystify, and stereotype the 'Muslim Other'. In the case of Hindi cinema, such a construction of the 'Muslim Other'¹ is surprising given the fact that for many decades, Bollywood has remained one of the strongest bastions of secularism and 'perhaps the least religiously segregated place in India today where Hindus and Muslims work together as well as intermarry'.² It is one of the few sites in India where Muslims are not marginal, but actually enjoy some prominence and success, and has many famous stars, successful directors, screenwriters, choreographers, lyricists, and composers. In this chapter, while discussing several Hindi films from both the pre-liberalization and post-liberalization periods, I have pointed to the secular potential of Bollywood. However, the problems that I refer to in this chapter are regarding the limits of the many secular themes found in Bollywood and how the dangerous stereotypes of Muslims as gangsters and terrorists continue to prevail in Bollywood scripts from the 1990s, despite the fact that several superstars of Hindi cinema openly identify themselves as Muslims. I am not an expert who can comment on the artistic process of a film and profess to know very little about the aesthetic questions such as the texture of the film, cinematic production, montages, and so on. Hence, I shall limit my analysis mostly to the symbolic level of the narrative in the films discussed in this chapter.

(p.94) 'Other' Agenda of Popular Media: Production of the Stereotyped 'Muslim Other'

In the various perspectives of the media, the 'Muslim Other' is identified with certain cultural symbols. Those cultural symbols need not necessarily reflect the common traits of the Muslim community in India. Rather, those symbols are often imposed to create a stereotypical and mythical image and then sold as an idealized form. For example, more often than not, advertisements in the media have depicted the cultural symbol of Muslim minorities as something alien. In this regard, Shahid Amin has brilliantly analysed some advertisements wherein Muslims are identified not only through a cap but a 'Turkish cap', thus in a sense marking them as aliens, being invested with an identity that is beyond the Indian nation-state. In effect, as Amin observes, '[t]he Turkish cap as a marker of Muslim distinctiveness is in fact quite nonsensical. One hardly encounters a Turki-topiwalla outside publicity posters and handouts. Indeed, it would be as difficult to procure a dozen Turkish caps in the average Indian town as it would be to purchase period costumes for a Shakespeare play'.³ Amin rightly points out that 'this stereotypical image on the billboard is not a real-life image: it is officially reproduced on such posters in the supposed interests of nation-building. The result is a paradox: although Indians are not used to a Turkish cap in their midst, it is a prominent sign of the Indian Muslim in national integration posters. In other words, the national advertisement asks us to recognize an image which we do not encounter within the geographical confines of our nation-state'.⁴ While complimenting Shahid Amin for his perceptive analysis, we will later see how Bollywood films also produce a stereotypical image of Muslim males with a beard and cap, and females in a burqa or at least a *chaddar* or headscarf. No one knows how many Indian Muslim males sport beards and how many wear caps. Nor does one know how many Muslim females wear the burqa, chaddar, or headscarves. But surely there are numerous Muslim men who do not sport beards or wear caps, and similarly many Muslim women who **(p.95)** do not wear burqas, chaddars, or headscarves. So, it is incredibly unjustified to show only a one-dimensional stereotyped image of Muslims in media wherein the beard, cap, burqa, and chaddar become the so-called 'Muslim' cultural symbols.

Malise Ruthven argues that the global media has equated Islam with images of 'medieval barbarism' and 'extremism' and thus produced a sense of 'Islamophobia'.⁵ Although Islamophobia is a form of racism, the term emerged because the category of racism was not adequate to explain the specific phenomena of discriminatory practices targeted against Muslims. In this sense, it is a 'post-racial' subject.⁶ Scholars point out that 'ethnic others' are often portrayed as members of 'communities that owe allegiance to hostile powers outside the national borders. The ethnic others are cast as agents that are set on undermining the territorial integrity of the country from within'.⁷ The production of the image of the 'Muslim other' in the name of potential 'terrorists' and 'anti-national elements' became clear enough in sites of contestations in the media

during the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 in the United States.

In the period of liberalization in India, media expansion has resulted in the emergence of the largest number of commercial television news outlets in the country than anywhere else in the world; news as presented through such television channels has a direct relationship with politics in India.⁸ Interestingly observers point out the peculiar differences in the portrayal of the image of Indian Muslims in global and national media.⁹ Hindi media, by and large, **(p.96)** condemned the entire alliance of the Taliban, Osama Bin Laden, and terrorism and also heavily critiqued Pakistan. It considered the high level of emotional anger and helplessness against the American war in Afghanistan as a form of sympathetic reaction of Muslims in India to terrorists. From time to time the Indian Hindi media has also questioned the loyalties of Indian Muslims, hinted that they were more committed to the international Islamic brotherhood than to their homeland, and has also seemingly suggested that there are very few examples to counter this viewpoint. The Urdu media, on the other hand, 'veered towards the other extreme of condemning America and the West for being anti-Islam and India for supporting the coalition; it characterized the Taliban and Afghans as innocent victims of American terrorism. It also cautiously and indirectly vindicated Bin Laden by mentioning that there was no evidence against him or he was actually an American creation. In short, the Urdu media, too, presented a one-dimensional and totally opposite picture from that of media in Hindi'.¹⁰ Hindi and Urdu media seemed to cater to the emotions of their respective consumers with a premeditated agenda of pitting Hindi against Urdu as an implicit communal demarcation between Hindus and Muslims. It was the English media that became 'the actual battleground where charges were traded and defended with equal vigour'.¹¹ On the one side were liberal-secular Muslims defending a moderate version of Islam and criticizing statements of both the communal and right-wing elements among Muslims and Hindus. But, on the other side were pro-Hindutva columnists and leaders who 'accused the Muslims of not openly denouncing Osama Bin Laden and Muslim terrorism, some [going] as far as accusing the Muslims of being blatantly anti-national'.¹² After the terror attacks of 11 September, the distorted and stereotyped images of Muslims in various forms of media representation such as in Hindi vernacular press, music records, radio, popular novels, and calendar art as well as regional language films have become increasingly common.¹³

(p.97) Commentators point out that liberal and progressive Muslims are neither adequately represented in media nor seen as representatives of Indian Muslims because the stereotypical Muslim symbols of 'beards' and 'white caps' do not fit those liberal-progressive Muslims.¹⁴ In fact, Rafiq Zakaria points to 'how unfairly the media has treated the moderates and liberals among the Muslims. Even the best of them do not find space. The words of the liberals are hardly quoted, and their deeds rarely reported. They may strive hard to bring

their fellow Muslims in modern times, but that is of little interest to the media. The views of the orthodox get front page, those of the liberals [are] tucked away in some obscure small corner'.¹⁵ So, the media, playing under the structures of the image industry, has its clientele and it tries to satisfy the demands of this clientele. Thus, observers have termed the media as a 'stereotyper' of the minorities of India.¹⁶ The production, mythification, and stereotyping of the 'Muslim other' are also systematically represented in Hindi cinema in Bollywood. As a noted film scholar has argued in the golden jubilee year of India's Independence:

Popular film texts (but not only they) propose their own political ground of possibility, usually in the form of allegorical scaffolding that enables narrative movement and resolution. It is an extremely interesting exercise to symptomatically read film texts as well as other aspects of the cinematic institution for these traces, for they bear witness to *a struggle over the state form* that has been going on in the ideological realm over the past fifty years. It is primarily in textual form that we find inscribed traces of the film narrative's political imagination.¹⁷

In this context, let us identify some Bollywood films and analyse the multiple representations of Indian Muslims in Hindi cinema. Hindi cinema as an accessible medium is available to the masses not only in India but also among the South Asian diasporic community under conditions **(p.98)** of globalization.¹⁸ Thus, any mythical and stereotyped image portrayed in Hindi cinema¹⁹ is not only consumed daily by people within India but worldwide. Moreover, in the age of liberalization, Hindi films can reach a much wider audience through the medium of television. However, before making a detailed and focused analysis of post-liberalization Hindi cinema, it is prudent to form a brief overview of the dominant trend in representing Muslims in Bollywood cinema and in this regard we also have to consider the ways in which the character of post-liberalization cinema has changed since the pre-liberalization period. Four key themes dominate the representational scheme of Muslims in Hindi films released in the 1990s and after: (a) the 'Muslim Other' as an enemy of the nation; (b) an imaginary notion of a 'Hindu-ized nation' where Muslims are relegated to a lower citizenship status; (c) Muslims as a source of terror within the nation-state; and (d) a conflation of Muslim-terrorist-Pakistani.²⁰

As pointed out earlier, the connection between politics and film cannot be denied. Such a link is very much part of the lively debate relevant in theorizing the questions of Muslim representations and the overtly political issue of using secular-communal categories. As Ashis Nandy has insightfully argued, like all politics, 'the politics of popular **(p.99)** cinema, too, is the art of the possible'²¹ since 'popular cinema not merely shapes and is shaped by politics, it constitutes the language for a new form of politics' as its 'focus is on the key concerns of some of the most articulate, vibrant and volatile sectors of the Indian electorate

today'.²² This politics–film connection is aptly articulated by noted film director Mahesh Bhatt in the following words:

Post-Independence Hindi cinema fashioned its products on this passionately articulated [secular] creed of Nehru. A glowing example of this is Dilip Kumar. He is an excellent symbol of secular India. The recent revival of *Mughal-e-Azam* and its global success proves that the pendulum of public taste has once again swung towards films that celebrate the pluralism and the secular creed of free India and has moved away from movies like *Gadar*, which in a very subtle manner demonise the Muslims and not just Pakistan.... According to me, the first rotten phase that Bollywood saw was when, under the name of demonising Pakistan, a lot of movies actually took perverse delight in mocking and ridiculing the Muslim community. It was a phase after which the public, having made one odd film into a big hit, themselves boycotted such films. And it is unlikely now that any such films will be made since they do not run at the box office anymore. That remains the saddest, most shameful chapter in the history of Bollywood, which had otherwise been very secular and had always celebrated pluralism. This only means that just as Nehru's creed was reflected in the movies for 40–50 years, it was Nehru's ideology that sparkled in our movies. Because, being what they are, leaders inspire filmmakers to echo what they feel. When the right wing Hindu fundamentalists came to power, they could only pass on their perversion to filmmakers, encouraging them to make movies of a new kind of genre, movies that made some sort of noise temporarily, but a noise that the people of India rejected.²³

There has been a marked shift of the secular space in Bollywood films that highlighted common Muslims within the genre of 'Muslim (p.100) social' from the pre-liberalization period to the post-liberalization era. From the 1990s, three features of mainstream Hindi films can be seen: (a) increasing communal overtones, (b) disappearance of the commoner as a protagonist, and (c) the glossy-glitzzy nature of cinematic representation with overseas shooting and film plots based on the diasporic community. These characteristics simultaneously appeared in Hindi cinema in the backdrop of the twin processes of globalization and the rising tide of Hindutva. This is in contrast to the 'Muslim social film' and 'Islamicate' cinema of the pre-Partition period that later took a turn towards 'secular nationalist imagining of the Muslim community and its transformation'.²⁴ Muslim characters in Bollywood movies have witnessed severe changes over the span of the last seven decades.²⁵ Film critic Syed Ali Mujtaba maps the shift of the political culture of Bollywood cinema in dealing with the Muslims. From being badshahs, nawabs, and aristocrats, Muslims have now been reduced to tramps and gun-toting jihadis on the Hindi screen. As Mujtaba points out:

Another interesting development in the late 1970s and 1980s was the portrayal of Mumbai's underworld characters, mostly Muslims in Bollywood films. ...Smugglers wearing Arab robes, puffing cigars, and carrying briefcases became a common sight in the movies in the 1980s. This trend became more direct in the late 1980s and 1990s. Movies like *Ghulam-e-Mustafa* and *Angaar* can be cited as examples. If Bollywood were to be believed, normal Muslims were becoming extinct in India. With a cap here and rosary there, Muslims at best could be accommodated for tokenism in Bollywood films. No wonder they began to be shown as offering prayers or singing *qawwalis* at religious tombs wherein the hero or heroine would come with their wish list.²⁶

(p.101) On the other hand, there were also films on social themes within a Muslim context.

In the 1970s and early 1980s, some 'Muslim social' films were made that explicitly focused on religious messages for the family such as *Mere Gharib Nawaz* (1973), *Dayar-E-Madina* (1975), *Niyaz Aur Namaz* (1977), *Aulia-E-Islam* (1979), and *Bismillah Ki Barkat* (1983). In fact, a number of such 'Muslim social' movies with apparent Islamic appeal have been funded by Mastan Haider Mirza alias Haji Mastan, the notorious Mumbai smuggler cum underworld don.²⁷ The 'Muslim social' movies, however, have accommodated several topics. Iqbal Masud briefly narrates the theme of 'Muslim social' films from the 1940s to early 1980s in the following words:

The genre of the 'Muslim Social' is an important contribution to Indian cinema. The stylisation started with *Pukar*. Later it became less legal in films like *Dard* (of the 40s), *Palkhi* and numerous other films down to the 70s. Such films dealt with the Muslim North Indian middle class and its social problems spiced with *ghazals* and *qawwalis*. The most meaningful of them was Mehboob's *Elan* (1947). This became a critique of the ghetto-like quality of certain segments of the Muslim middle class and emphasised the need for education of Muslim youth.... After *Elan* the Muslim Social declined into a sentimental, mushy affair. But it remained a popular genre. ... In fact the Muslim Social charted the decline of the Muslim ashraf (the gentry)—a feature which comes through movingly despite the hackneyed trappings. In this sense *Pakeezah* (1971) was the 'farewell' film of the Muslim Social. Kamal Amrohi made this story of the tragedy of a courtesan. But what really raised *Pakeezah* above the normal rut was Meena Kumari's portrayal of a once gracious culture slowly disintegrating. ... In the 70s, a new stereotype began to emerge. This was the common or garden Muslim. He would be a model of loyalty and discipline and when he died it would be with the Kalma (or Proclamation of Faith) on his lips. He no longer talked the flowery Urdu of the Shahenshah and the Nawabs but the patois of the street.... In *Coolie* (Amitabh Bachchan) portrays a Muslim

coolie who becomes a revolutionary [*sic*]. The old Mehboob syndrome of Muslim radicalism is reproduced in *Coolie*. *Coolie* represents the rise and integration of the **(p.102)** Common Muslim in the working masses of the country rebelling for change.²⁸

The decade of the 1970s saw the prominence of Indian secularism in Bollywood cinema. As Chidananda Das Gupta argues, ‘*Amar Akbar Anthony*, an improbable tale of a Hindu, a Muslim, and a Christian who turn out to be brothers; the overcoming of communal prejudices and emergence of a deep camaraderie among the three, had tremendous appeal, and the film was a landmark in the growth of the “family” theme.’²⁹ The communal harmony with an agenda of Indian secularism as portrayed in *Amar Akbar Anthony* (1977) within the framework of a ‘family theme’ is nothing short of a possible metaphorical connection between the secular family and the nation—with the nation as an extension of the family.³⁰ On the other hand, the village of Ramgarh in *Sholay* (1975), as Sonali Ghosh Sen analyses, almost depicts ‘a microcosm of the “secular India” of the 1970s’. She further argues:

Here, a mosque and a temple nestle comfortably on opposite hillocks and the blind Imam, magnificently performed by A.K. Hangal in a small but important role, is respected, admired and even helped down the steps by the village folk, irrespective of religion or caste. When the blind Imam’s son, Ahmad (Sachin), departing for his new job in the city, is waylaid and murdered by Gabbar’s men, his dead body carries a letter from Gabbar, threatening worse retaliation if Veeru (Dharmendra) and Jai (Amitabh Bachchan) are not handed over to the dacoits. As the old man weeps over his dead son, the villagers angrily tell the Thakur that they cannot take any more: he must hand over his two-man army to Gabbar. But the Imam shames the villagers by asking *Allah* why He didn’t give him more sons to sacrifice as ‘martyrs’ for the village. He reinforces the popular sentiment of communal harmony, where the village becomes a symbol of the nation, and the young boy becomes a Muslim soldier who died serving his country.³¹

(p.103) Madhav Prasad argues that the 1970s also saw some films where the ‘hero acquired the mandate of workers or ghettoized subalterns’. Interestingly, those were often ‘Muslim figures, who stood not only for the minority community, but by extension for the entire subaltern population’. Prasad points out that ‘Sher Khan in *Zanjeer* and Rahim Chacha in *Deewar* are figures of this type, as is, with slight differences, the blind Muslim in *Sholay*’.³² However, Akbar Ahmed projects a trajectory of the changing nature of Bollywood cinema from the respectable ‘Muslim representation’ during the mid-decades of the last century to the marginalization of the ‘Muslim body’ in more contemporary Hindi films. As Ahmed observes:

Muslim fortunes in India reflect their position in Indian films. The role and image of Muslims have therefore also undergone a change. Once, Muslims were an issue in India. Their politics and social values mattered. After the creation of Pakistan, their importance began to dwindle. But *Bombay* had groped towards a statement. If there was a philosophy in *Bombay*, it was a positive one suggesting harmony and synthesis. Early 'Muslim' films were made with social and cultural themes outweighing religious ones (*Anarkali*, *Mughal-e-Azam*, *Taj Mahal*, *Chaudhvin ka Chand*, *Mere Mehboob*). It was a tradition established with the very first Indian 'talkies', made almost two decades before Independence (*Alam Ara*, *Noor Jahan*, *Laila Majnu*). These films were costume dramas and extravagantly made. In them, the harmonious interaction between Hindu and Muslim characters is emphasized (Akbar's loyal Rajput wife in *Mughal-e-Azam* and the gallant role of his brave Rajput soldiers, repeated in *Taj Mahal*, the best Hindu friends of the hero in *Chaudhvin ka Chand* and *Mere Mehboob*).³³

Ahmed notes a sound cultural synthesis in the films of the 1950s and 1960s wherein *Allah* and *Bismillah* were common idiomatic expressions in conversations and in songs, both in Hindi and Urdu. Muslim actors took Hindu names such as Dilip Kumar, Pran, and Madhubala; or sometimes Anglicized ones such as Johnny Walker. Muslims had a high-profile presence, even dominating Hindi cinema, for example, such star actors as Dilip Kumar, Madhubala, Nargis, and Waheeda Rehman; famous and reputed singers such as Mohammad Rafi, Talat Mahmood, (p.104) Suraiya, and Noor Jehan; comedians such as Johnny Walker; lyricists such as Kaifi Azmi, Sahir Ludhiyanvi, and Badayuni; and directors such as Mehboob, Kardar, and Kamal Amrohi. 'Muslim' films focused on themes such as prostitution and the plight of women as in the cases of *Pakeezah*, *Nikah*, *Umrao Jaan*, and *Bazaar*. Ahmed correctly points out that 'their norms and mores are little more than an interesting anthropological comment, their society a relic of the past'. With the rise of Amitabh Bachchan in the 1970s, erstwhile Muslim stars such as Dilip Kumar (Yusuf Khan) showed a decline. There were still a few Muslim stars such as Shabana Azmi and Naseeruddin Shah, but they were mainly associated with the alternative or new cinema of the 1970s and 1980s wherein they just 'appear often only to uphold India's secular position'. In *Awam* (1987), Colonel Zaidi loyally breaks up a spy ring and in court defends his position as a Muslim Indian by claiming, 'The Muslims of Pakistan are loyal Pakistanis, I am a loyal Indian.' During this period, certain 'Muslim roles' were enacted by Amitabh Bachchan, wherein he

attempts to show the essential unity of Hindu and Muslim by belonging to one religion but being brought up in the household of the other like in *Coolie* and *Laawaris*. By the late 1980s, the 'Muslim protagonist' started disappearing in the film scripts. The 'Muslim' was perhaps an honest policeman or the loyal side-kick to the hero for a few films, while Pran, the

popular villain, became the honest uncle, 'Aslam', the good Muslim who looks after Amitabh when all fail him in *Shahenshah*.³⁴

In the 1990s, with greater liberalization, privatization, and globalization, and a simultaneous rise of Hindutva politics, it is interesting to note that Indian films rapidly lost the cinematic presence of Muslim protagonists despite the fact that the superstar Khans reigned over Bollywood during the same period. Today, the presence of the Muslim protagonist is not only marginal but a change has already taken place from the good and honest Muslim characters to the roles of villains, thugs, hoodlums, terrorists, anti-national characters, or foreign spies. Therefore, from pre-liberalization to the post-liberalization Hindi cinema, we notice both continuity and departure in representing Muslims, as we will see in the following pages of this chapter.

(p.105) The Missing Muslim

The way in which Indian Muslims are represented in Hindi films is plagued with many problems. In the first place, there is under-representation of the Muslim protagonist on screen despite the large presence of Muslim actors, directors, lyricists, scriptwriters, producers, and others in the film industry. In short, though Muslims are dons (both positively as a hero and negatively as a villain) in the films and masters behind the camera, there are very few films based on Muslim protagonists when one considers the number of films that are released every year. Even a reputed film director such as Mehboob Khan, in a post-Partition newly independent India, did not raise the issue of the 'Muslim social' and was instead interested in the thematic concerns of nation-building and the idea of Nehruvian idealism in his famous work *Mother India* (1957).³⁵ This film also portrayed the revolt of the common man against the nexus of feudal lords and moneylenders in the context of the abolition of the zamindari system in the 1950s. Muslim characters in Hindi films have traditionally been given token representation as 'disinterested outsiders'.³⁶ However, since the early 1990s, when the first effects of liberalization were noticed in India, the theme of the 'Missing Muslim' in contemporary Bollywood cinema became increasingly prominent.

One may well argue that even if there are a few Muslim characters on-screen, generally, Muslims are successful in the film industry and are quite popular among the masses. However, the fact of the matter is that they do not have a 'Muslim identity' as such but possess a 'celebrity identity'. It is amateurish to say that people like or regard the superstar Khans (Shah Rukh, Aamir, Salman, and Saif), or powerful actors such as Kader Khan, Irrfan Khan, Nawazuddin Siddiqui, Shabana Azmi, Farida Jalal, Tabu, and others in films, or appreciate great writers and lyricists such as Kaifi Azmi, Sahir Ludhyanvi, Majrooh Sultanpuri, Makhdoom Mohiuddin, Rahi Masoom Raza, **(p.106)** Javed Akhtar, Nida Fazli, and others (some of whom were associated with the Progressive Writers' Movement) or directors such as Mehboob Khan, Muzaffar Ali, Imtiaz Ali,

Zoya Ahktar, and others, more as ‘Muslims’ and less as performers. Rather, the dazzling Khans are largely popular as brand names and celebrities in an era of liberalization and globalization. On the intellectual front though, academics feel the need to investigate ‘the current drive to understand the political implications of Indian popular cinema’.³⁷ The Muslim question has been largely missing in academic debates and discussions on Indian cinema with a few exceptions. Most film academicians who have studied the category of ‘Muslim’ have largely done so from the point of view of a communal–secular discourse and have given lesser importance to the issues of class, social exclusion, and discrimination that are intimately related to the theme of the ‘Muslim social’. In academic film studies, appropriate attention was paid to the visual culture of the century-long cross-pollination that ultimately resulted in the Hindi *masala* [literally, spicy] film, which assimilates and amalgamates the complex assortment of tensions, importations, absorptions, and appropriations by and between the colonizer and the colonized, between regional cinema and Bollywood Hindi cinema, between Hindus and Muslims, between the state and the individual, between Bollywood and Hollywood, and between the north and the south, to name a few comparative vantage points.³⁸ A serious academic work that specifically focuses on Indian Muslims and Bollywood cinema, particularly highlighting the culture of Bollywood cinema in dealing with the Muslim question, is long awaited.

It is important to note the token representation of Muslims in the super-hits of the 1990s from the house of Barjatyas, *Hum Aapke Hain Koun* (1994)³⁹ and *Hum Saath Saath Hain* (1999). In *Hum Aapke Hai Koun*, the Muslim character is not only in a supporting role but it is **(p.107)** also a comic one, played by the noted comedian Satish Shah. Therefore, even if he is a doctor-cum-family friend of a big Hindu bourgeois family, he does not have a beard, is identified as a ‘Muslim character’ by his use of a particular woollen cap and through his fascination for *shayari* (Urdu poetry), and is presented in a comic form.⁴⁰ Also, his wife Razia (Himani Shivpuri) always covers her head. A portrayal of ‘Muslim subjugation’ and the upper-crust Hindu hierarchical position is employed in the next Barjatya mega starrer, *Hum Saath Saath Hain*. In this film, the prominent Muslim character, Anwar, is played on screen by noted villain and comedian Shakti Kapoor—an owner of a wedding band and yet a friend of a big industrialist a role played by Mohnish Behl. The film ends with Anwar marrying Rehana (Huma Khan), secretary of the patriarch of the big business family, Ramkishan (Alok Nath). Rehana’s father, known as Khan Saheb in the film, is an employee of Ramkishan. In this way, class and communal harmony are shown between Hindu elites and Muslim subalterns in an oversimplified manner. The Muslim subaltern is mostly located and imagined in a subordinate position in Bollywood cinema. Rarely do we find an inversion of this situation, with Muslims as the main protagonists in a film. One can argue that both these films of the 1990s are actually predecessors of a number of family melodramas that were released in early 2000s, which showcased the patriarchal control of big business and

institutions, such as *Mohabbatein* (2000), *Ek Rishta* (2001), *Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gam* (2001), and *Baghban* (2003).⁴¹

In Kamal Haasan's *Hey Ram!* (2000), even superstar Shah Rukh Khan played a supporting role as an Afghan archaeologist, Amjad Ali Khan, donning Pathan attire. In the Bollywood blockbuster *Lagaan* (2001), which went to be nominated for an Oscar, Raj Zutshi's character as Ismail was only a small role, which again endorses our previously discussed point of 'Missing Muslim' in popular Bollywood films. But one thing was striking about this character—he retired hurt on the cricket field and then, later on, played well to save his team and his (p. 108) village, which symbolizes the Indian nation-state. One may also view the character who was hurt in the field as a disadvantaged Muslim, which depicts the real story of the Muslim community in India—a disadvantaged group, though metaphorically characterized in the film.

In Rajkumar Santoshi's *Khakee* (2004) the Muslim character is an honest medic, Dr Iqbal Ansari, unwilling to compromise with the nefarious designs of a politician who has triggered communal riots in the city. As a result, the corrupt police--politician nexus frames Ansari as a terrorist, with links to the Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) and waging a proxy war in India. Samar Khan's *Shaurya* (2008) reflected upon the issue of communal discrimination in the Indian army with the storyline of a Muslim army officer, Captain Javed Khan (Deepak Dobriyal), as a victim in the backdrop of Indian army's excesses in killing innocent children as suspected terrorists in Kashmir. Although the film was based on the trial of the Muslim army officer who was charged with murdering his senior officer, the Muslim officer was not the main protagonist in the film; rather he was in a supporting role. Interestingly, the army lawyer, Major Siddhant Chaudhary (Rahul Bose), who successfully fought the case in favour of the Muslim army officer, was the main protagonist in the film. This film evokes a relevant topic about communal discrimination and bias against Muslims, but only endorses the point about the 'Missing Muslim' as protagonist in Bollywood cinema. In another case, the nominal presence of a Muslim woman, Yasmin, in *Dhobi Ghat* (2011) may only be likened to a guest appearance.

Abhishek Kapoor's *Kai Po Che!* (2013) based on Chetan Bhagat's novel *The Three Mistakes of My Life* had a couple of Muslim characters—Ali, a talented young cricketer, and his father, an activist of a rival political party of the Hindutva group. The film showed Gujarat's major events in the recent past such as the 2001 earthquake and the 2002 riots after the Godhra massacre. It also employed a redemptive approach in showing the Hindutva activist—Omkar Shastri (Amit Sadh)—regretting his act of killing his friend Ishaan Bhatt (Sushant Singh Rajput) while attacking Muslims during the riots. During the concluding part of the film, after Omkar finishes a ten-year jail term for his involvement in the riots and the accidental murder of Ishaan, Omkar is shown shedding tears in the cricket stadium gallery where he was taken by his friend

Govind Patel to watch Ali playing for the Indian cricket team. **(p.109)** One can argue that the film subtly sends the message to forget and forgive the Gujarat riots, an interesting coincidence as the film was released on 22 February 2013, just a couple of months after Narendra Modi apologized for his past mistakes during the assembly election victory speech in Ahmedabad on 20 December 2012. The then Gujarat chief minister, after his third consecutive assembly election victory, had reportedly said, 'If there has been a mistake somewhere, if I have erred somewhere, I seek apology from you, the six crore Gujaratis.... You have given me power. Now you also give me your blessings so that I do not commit any mistake, no one is hurt and there is no mistake by me even unknowingly'.⁴²

It must be noted that the Muslim characters in all the films discussed here are small roles when compared to the non-Muslim protagonists in those films. This actually foregrounds the argument of the 'Missing Muslim' in contemporary Hindi cinema after liberalization. However, the preceding discussion also leads to the problems of representing Muslims as 'mythical' and 'mystifying' in Hindi cinema, which will be analysed in the next section of this chapter.

The Mythical Muslim and the Mystifying Context

Ashis Nandy has correctly identified mainstream Hindi cinema as 'society's biggest and most influential mythmaker'.⁴³ In this regard, the problem of (mis)representation of Muslims as a re-produced stereotypical and mythical image of a feudal character, terrorist, or a gangster can be witnessed in Hindi cinema. In the recent past, a remake of *Umrao Jaan* (2006), with the off-screen couple Abhishek Bachchan and Aishwarya Rai, was released, and *Mughal-e-Azam* was re-released with colour prints in 2004. Films such as *Umrao Jaan* (1981 version, with Rekha as the protagonist), *Mughal-e-Azam* (1960), and *Pakeezah* (1971, starring Meena Kumari and Raj Kumar), reflect a dying feudal culture while portraying the Muslim woman's revolt against the conservative feudal order and Islamic orthodoxy. However, in all three films, the **(p.110)** Muslim woman protagonists are *tawaifs*—courtesans performing for rich clients such as nawabs and badshahs (Muslim aristocrats and rulers)—which is again a stereotypical image of Muslim women and men. In such genres of Hindi cinema, the use of the Urdu language, *tawaifs*, and, in many cases, Awadh represents what Mukul Kesavan calls the 'Islamicate roots' of Hindi cinema.⁴⁴ The context of Lucknow as an imagined place for depicting Islamicate culture with the portrayal of the nobleman and the courtesan has also been dealt with in the recent studies on the subject.⁴⁵

The treatment of the Muslim woman protagonist is not fundamentally different in the new cinema of the much respected and reputed director Shyam Benegal as well. Although he tackles novel issues regarding marginalized Muslim female narratives in *Mammo* (1994) and *Sardari Begum* (1996), in both films Benegal depicts a stereotypical image of the Muslim woman. There are many roles that

reinforce the general perception and popular stereotype of the good versus evil Muslim woman. For example, Farida Jalal as a chaddar and burqa-clad woman as the main protagonist in *Mammo* is portrayed as a good Muslim woman. In contrast, Smriti Mishra and Kirron Kher as the titular character in earlier and later life in the film *Sardari Begum*—about a courtesan who learnt music from a concubine, Idbal Bai (Surekha Sikri), of a prominent Hindu client, Hemraj (Amrish Puri)—is a bad Muslim woman. Therefore, despite their progressive content in the form of questioning patriarchal power structures while narrating the story from a woman's perspective, with the assertive voices of the female protagonists, the limits of these films are exposed with its stereotypical imaging of the Muslim woman. This being said, the anti-establishment messages of these films—a Muslim woman's struggle in the face of the confusion of Indo-Pakistani citizenship issues in *Mammo*, and the fight **(p.111)** of the Muslim woman against the cultural relic of the feudal past in *Sardari Begum*—are indeed laudable. However, today, both Muslim men and women are socially, economically, and politically marginalized in an age of liberalization, privatization, and globalization, as has been noticed by several empirical studies that were elaborately discussed in the previous chapter. Therefore, a more meaningful cinema would have captured the issues of the present Muslim situation in India rather than the memoirs of the past in dealing with the question of Muslim identity. These kinds of (mis)representations are thus attached to the problem of the mythical Muslim that does not represent the reality of the contemporary 'Muslim social'.

Thus, Bollywood cinema as a supposedly visual representation of the real does not actually characterize the social reality at least in the case of Muslim identity but mystifies the myriad problems of the Muslim minorities. Such mythical and stereotyped representations of Muslims in Bollywood films have far-reaching consequences. As Fareed Kazmi correctly argues:

Whether one likes it or not, a large part of the Indian consciousness is shaped through these films.... Conventional Hindi films, unlike great works of art, become subservient to the dominant ideologies since they fail to distance themselves from such ideologies, and instead of challenging the ideological assumptions of their times, tend to reinforce and perpetuate them. In India, the mass media are primary technologies of ideology, with the Hindi conventional cinema standing in the forefront of them because of its remarkable 'illusionistic' guise and totalist framework and because of the enthusiasm with which it is received by the people.⁴⁶

The real problems of Indian Muslims such as educational backwardness, unemployment, communal discrimination, and so on are hardly depicted in Bollywood films. Instead, the industry creates its own allusions and nostalgia of

the feudal past, which one can notice in a host of films in the middle decades of the last century.

(p.112) Divorce and remarriage among Muslims did not generally figure in Hindi cinema until *Nikah* (1982) explicitly invoked the Islamic tenet of talaq as a central trope. In *Mere Mehboob* and *Pakeezah* on the other hand, using the veil is shown as the acceptable dress for the Muslim woman as per Islamic social practice.⁴⁷ Satyajit Ray's *Shatranj Ke Khilari* (1977), based on Munshi Premchand's short story of the same name (the Urdu version being *Shatranj Ki Baazi*), narrates the story of two feudal landlords in the backdrop of the British colonial annexation of the princely state of Awadh in 1856. Shyam Benegal's *Junoona* (1978) also depicts the story of a Muslim feudal lord in love with an English woman at the time of the 1857 revolt. In the post-liberalization period, a similar representation of Muslim protagonists as feudals can also be seen in *Sanam Bewafa* (1991), in which Salman Khan, Danny, and Pran acted. The film was based on the story of conflict between two Muslim feudal families. However, Ismail Merchant's *Muhafiz* (1994, the English title being *In Custody*), starring Shashi Kapoor (in the role of Urdu poet Nur Shajahanabadi), Om Puri (as Deven, a college teacher), and Shabana Azmi (as Nur's second wife, Imtiaz Begum), showed the decline of Urdu language and poetry; it also treated the subject with sensitivity by breaking the stereotype that Urdu is exclusively spoken by Muslims as it also portrayed non-Muslim characters speaking in Urdu. The film shows a talented Muslim poet who is non-religious, drinks rum, visits *kothas* (brothels), and follows a Sufi master, while his second wife (a former courtesan) is dishonest and plagiarizes and picks up lines from her husband's poetry. The film, on the other hand, shows how Imtiaz Begum asserts that Urdu poetry is not just a 'fiefdom' of men but that a woman can also write poetry even if she picks some lines from her husband's work and adds them to her own poetic expressions. Thus, the film has many layers, but it also problematizes the representation of Muslim characters. In M.F. Hussain's *Meenaxi* (2004), too, a prominent character of the film is Nawab Mian, a sherwani-clad Hyderabad Urdu novelist. Nawab drives a vintage car, lives in an old traditional palatial mansion, and symbolizes the declining landed Ashrafi elite.

Ashutosh Gowariker's *Jodhaa Akbar* (2008) narrates the romantic love story of Mughal Emperor Akbar and Rajput princess Jodhaa Bai **(p.113)** while reminding us about the great legacy of Indian secularism that had its roots in Akbar's reign. However, *Jodhaa Akbar* only endorses our previous point about the portrayal of Muslim characters as historically embedded in the feudal past as we have seen similar films such as *Mughal-e-Azam*, *Taj Mahal*, *Laila Majnu*, and *Umrao Jaan*. *Jodhaa Akbar* is an important film as far as the theme of championing secular ethos in a multi-religious and pluralist country such as India is concerned. The film is also significant in critiquing the Muslim orthodoxy that Akbar was so dismissive of in his fundamental commitment towards secularism. But one also expects a film on secular principles with a

Muslim protagonist in contemporary India rather than a historical film from a reputed director such as Ashutosh Gowariker, who incidentally had to fight against some Hindutva groups on issues of inter-religious marriage and historical correctness shown in his film. The courage that Gowariker showed in making this film and subsequently in defending it against the attacks of Hindutva groups surely proved him to be a committed film-maker. A film based on contemporary India with Muslim protagonists in the backdrop of a communally charged atmosphere is surely expected from a committed filmmaker in the near future. But given the fact that currently we reside in an India characterized by a series of incidences of communal violence, *Jodhaa Akbar* was a timely film that reminded us about our secular past and thus sent an important message to uphold the secular edifice of our polity that we inherited from the past. However, even after saying so it must be noted that *Jodhaa Akbar* upheld the continuity of the stereotyped Muslim protagonist as an emperor as we have seen in the pre-liberalization era films such as *Shahjahan*, *Taj Mahal*, or *Mughal-e-Azam*. Also, in the times of Hindutva-influenced political discourses of ghar wapsi and love jihad, although *Jodhaa Akbar* tries to become a counter-narrative it fails to do so by presenting a tale in which Akbar is sufficiently indigenized and homogenized to become part of a (Hindu) nation.⁴⁸ In contrast, Sanjay Leela Bhansali's *Padmaavat* (2018) features a brutal and misogynist Muslim emperor who is infamous for his cruelty and treachery.

(p.114) During the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) regime, a number of films narrating the violent riots during Partition were released such as Deepa Mehta's *Earth* (1998) based on Bapsi Sidhwa's novel *Ice Candy Man*, Pamela Rooks' *Train to Pakistan* (1998) based on Khushwant Singh's historical novel, and Chandra Dwivedi's *Pinjar* (2003) based on Amrita Pritam's Punjabi novel. In all these films, the prominent Muslim characters were shown in a negative light with an explicit message of victimhood of Sikhs and Hindus at the hands of Muslims. During the Partition, there were also many Muslim victims. However, there is hardly any serious Hindi cinema that has shown the victimhood experienced by Muslims at that time.

While dealing with the misrepresentation and stereotypical image constructions of Indian Muslims, it is vital to analyse two hit films of the late 1990s, when there was a noticeable rise of Hindutva politics in the country. One of these is J.P. Dutta's *Border* (1997) and the other is John Mathew Mathan's *Sarfarosh* (1999). These two films can be classified within the genre of systemic films wherein the film portrays a system (equated with the nation) that can be justified on the basis of a perceived threat from outside the system. It depicts a scenario in which there are fewer problems within the system than outside it. So, outsiders (portrayed as external enemies of the system) are shown as challenging the system and the basic job of all the citizens is to fight the outsiders without creating too much of a hullabaloo about the problems inherent in the system. Thus, the theme of both the films is that we as obedient citizens need to fight the

outsider, represented by the Pakistani army in the war of 1971 in *Border* and as cross-border terrorism and the ISI-coordinated proxy war in *Sarfarosh*. The treatment of the above-mentioned theme in the two films seems to indicate that the solutions to the problems arising out of the adoption of the neoliberal dispensation inside the system are only in fighting off the external and alien forces, which are depicted as enemies of the system. Fareed Kazmi points out that BJP leader L.K. Advani's Rath Yatra in Bhopal propagating Hindutva and calling 'for a sincere debate on the ideological and theological basis on which Pakistan was created as it continued to be India's foremost problem in the sphere of national security and foreign policy' converged with the release of *Border*, the biggest blockbuster of 1997. Kazmi rightly points out that in *Border* director J.P. Dutta showed 'no patriotic Muslim soldiers in the Indian Army fighting the (p.115) legendary 5–6 December 1971 battle of Longewala, upon which the film is supposedly based'.⁴⁹

The 'Muslim' Terrorist

The stereotypical representation of Muslims as terrorists, anti-nationals, hooligans, villains, and underworld dons can be seen in many popular films. The period of liberalization also coincided with the rise of Hindutva politics and separatist movements in Kashmir. In such a context, a series of films on jihadi terrorism in Kashmir were made such as *Roja* (1992), *Mission Kashmir* (2000), *Yahaan* (2005), *Fanaa* (2006), and *Lamhaa* (2010). Recently, a film based on the global nature of jihadi terrorism is *Omerta* (2018) and it shows Islamist terrorism as a response to the war in Bosnia and Afghanistan. Among the films on terrorism, *Roja* was one of the first hits that raised and rehearsed the issues of liberalization.⁵⁰ Soon after, the violence in Kashmir and the terrorist attacks of September 11 set a context where significant transformation occurred in several Hindi movies—from the images of naive Muslim characters the focus shifted to images of those Muslim protagonists who are associated with subversive acts of religious extremism and fanaticism, and criminality and terrorism, thus portraying a demonic image of the Muslim community in popular imagination.⁵¹ The demonization of Muslim characters in negative roles of terrorists is a prominent trend in contemporary Bollywood. As a commentator argues

(p.116) If Bollywood is to be believed, the Indian Muslim is almost-always a gun totting, bearded guy with blood shot eyes bursting at the seams with irrational anger [*sic*]. With a senseless itch to murder and desperate plans to destroy, his hatred for India is matched only by his unflinching commitment to Jihad.... *Roja* was the climactic film which redefined the contours of Bollywood evil, making it more real, pointed and that much more dangerous.... The alienation of the ordinary Kashmiri from the national mainstream, the simmering discontentment with successive governments and, most importantly, why the young pick up guns instead of a career; *Roja* asks no questions, offers no choices. What it did, however, was to open the floodgates for a number of slash-and-burn movies that

target Pakistan and the Indian Muslim (not explicitly stated but implicitly implied) without making any attempt to delve into the several complex processes that breed or sustains terrorism [sic]. *Sarfarosh*, *Maa Tujhe Salam*, *Pukar*, and *Gadar* effectively did the ideological work of re-affirming the nation while demonizing the Muslim 'other' with relentless ferocity. *Gadar* was a commercial slam-dunk and its hero, Sunny Deol, with his iconic, chest-thumping brand of patriotism left little to imagination. *Sarfarosh* went a step further and in a chillingly sinister move casts the Ghazal singer from Pakistan as the undercover terrorist.... A whole arsenal of unexamined prepositions is bruited about without any self-consciousness or skepticism. Islam means Jihad, Muslim means terrorist; film after film hammers it down heavily till it seems the only truth possible. The possibility of any sympathetic understanding is simply ruled out by the point-of-view convention. The spectator is unwittingly made subliminal conquistadores who share the overheated perspective of the filmmaker.⁵²

Films such as Khalid Mohammed's *Fiza* (2000) and Kunal Kohli's *Fanaa* (2006) reflect the contestations and contradictions between 'secular-nationalist Muslims' and 'militant Muslims' in a somewhat milder way, where the roles of the main protagonists are performed by superstars such as Hrithik Roshan (in *Fiza*) and Aamir Khan (in *Fanaa*). However the female characters in both the films portrayed as being subjugated and submissive to the male ones. In this sense, the secular-nationalist Muslims portrayed by the lead heroines of these films—Karishma Kapoor as the sister and Jaya Bachchan as the mother of the 'Muslim (p.117) terrorist' in *Fiza*, and Kajol as the lover of the same in *Fanaa*—are deeply problematic because the Muslim women in these films are shown as having a soft corner for the 'Muslim terrorist'. So, the 'Muslim other' is not only depicted by the reproduction of dominant stereotypes but more dangerously is celebrated through the stardom of the 'Muslim terrorist' as he is made the main protagonist in these films. In fact, one could argue that these films on Kashmir have served the cause of both Hindutva ideology and the neoliberal status quo by 'conflating the two issues with separate genealogies—the Kashmir issue and the position of Indian Muslims'.⁵³ Except Vishal Bhardwaj's *Haider* (2014),⁵⁴ one can hardly remember a popular Hindi film in the post-liberalization period that has sensibly dealt with the Kashmir question with seriousness, honesty, and integrity. It is interesting to note that *Haider* is a film on Kashmir rather than one directly addressing the question of Muslim identity. Such a fundamental difference between the Kashmir question and the Muslim question is not shown in most Bollywood films, which often conflate the Muslim and Kashmiri terrorist as the same entity.

Regarding the false representations of Indian Muslims in Bollywood, film critic Syed Ali Mujtaba argues as follows:

More often than not Muslims are painted in negative shades. Smugglers are shown dressed in the traditional Arab robe, carrying a briefcase, making lewd gestures at the dancers at the villain's wine and dance party. Then, Bollywood heroes are often shown bashing local rowdies dressed in lungi and sleeveless singlet, an image that somehow gets mixed up with characters that live in the old Muslim localities in many north Indian towns. The most common cliché of Bollywood is the characterisation of nautch girls, who often have Muslim names.... Anti-Pakistan movies have been a recent favourite of Bollywood directors who lack the skills and creativity not to follow the crowd. In order to sell patriotism, Pakistan is depicted as the monster in whose defeat rests Indian national pride. These anti-Pakistan movies end up conveying that all Muslims living in India are either black sheep or Pakistani agents.... Muslim sentiments are hurt when they are regularly shown as ruffians, **(p.118)** dancing girls, smugglers or terrorists. Mere tokenism of characters on some occasions—sporting a beard and a cap, a frail good-natured tramp that lives in penury next door—is not enough of a sop to placate.⁵⁵

In this context, *Sarfarosh* is unique for a number of reasons. As Rakesh Gupta points out,

First, the film names Pakistan to be an enemy involved in cross-border terrorism. No other film had named Pakistan before. Ever since [then], Pakistan is now named in many commercial films, e.g., in *Gadar, The Hero—Love Story of a Spy*—both have Sunny Deol as the main protagonist. This is the reflection of the NDA government's new radical thrust in dealing with Pakistan. Second, the protagonist, a police officer, Aamir Khan, mouths the dialogue that he does not need any Salim to defend his house. A former Prime Minister of India is reported to have said in an election campaign that his party does not need the vote of Muslims. The film is a part of the dominant political view of the problem of terrorism, as Pakistan-centric.⁵⁶

Evidently, this film problematically questions the patriotism of Indian Muslims. Moreover, it is a film that prominently 'treats Naseeruddin Shah as villain in the role of Gulfam Hassan, a ghazal singer, trying to destabilize the country'.⁵⁷ Thus, for the audience of the film, both the Muslim identity of actor Naseeruddin Shah and the character of Gulfam Hassan, in effect, converges in the image of an anti-national. In *Sarfarosh*, Gulfam Hassan relocates to Pakistan during Partition and acts as an undercover ISI agent taking part in the Pakistan-sponsored proxy war and terror network against India. At the end of the last century, Hindi cinema changed drastically in relation to the portrayal of Muslim characters as terrorists on screen.

The communal stereotypes and negative portrayals of Muslims collaborating with an external enemy—the Pakistan army or ISI—are visible in most terrorism-centric films such as *Roja*, *Border*, *Sarfarosh*, (p.119) *16 December*, *Pukar*, *Maa Tujhe Salaam*, *Indian*, *Hero*, *LOC*, and *Ek Tha Tiger*. Films such as Subhash Ghai's *Black and White* only replace the Pakistani mastermind with an Afghan jihadi terrorist who is helped by local Indian Muslims in Delhi. As Sudhanva Deshpande argues:

In all war films, the enemy country is the aggressor and the motherland the victim. However, there is now a new aggressiveness in these films, and it feeds on the fantasy that India's military superiority over Pakistan will result in the latter's annihilation. In this fantasy, macho India flexes its nuclear muscles. These films also reinforce the identification of terrorism with Islam. In *Roja*, the hero hurls himself onto a burning India flag to save it even as the villain, a Muslim terrorist, remains unmoved, deep in prayer; meanwhile, a patriotic song is belted out in the background. Some of these films do, however, show a patriotic Indian Muslim character as a token.... The terms on which this character appears in the films are often problematic. Recall *Sarfarosh*. Here, the hero, a Rajput police officer, has a Muslim subordinate who, early in the film, refuses to fight for India, saying that the country has given them (Muslims) nothing. To which, the hero says: 'I don't need the help of any Salim to save my country.' Many of these films had started mouthing the rhetoric of the proponents of Hindutva. The Sunny Deol-starrer *Maa Tujhe Salaam* coined a slogan, which was picked up by the Hindutva brigade: *Doodh mangoge to kheer denge*, *Kashmir mangoge to cheer denge* (Ask us for milk, and we will give you *kheer*, but we will dismember you if you ask for Kashmir). And then, of course, there is *Gadar*, the biggest hit of recent times. *Gadar* says some nasty things about Muslims, about Partition, about the relationship between India and Pakistan and between Hindus and Sikhs and so on.... Profit-making is the only logic that seems to underpin the Mumbai film industry, and it appears that there is profit in communalism.⁵⁸

In a post September 11 world, a dominant trend of portraying Muslims as terrorists can be seen in a number of films such as *Dhoka* (2007), *Black Friday* (2007), *Contract* (2008), *Aamir* (2008), *Hijack* (2008), *A Wednesday!* (2008), *New York* (2009), and *Kurbaan* (2009). Pooja Bhatt's *Dhoka* features a Muslim protagonist, Zaid (Muzammil Ibrahim), a police officer in Mumbai and his wife Sara (Tulip Joshi), a jihadi suicide bomber. It also unravels the prejudiced mindset against (p.120) the Muslims as potential terrorists, to the extent that even Zaid, though himself a police officer, becomes the victim of such a suspicion. But what sets *Dhoka* apart from other similar films is that it never takes sides, as it does not blame any particular community. Instead, it blames the people who spread terror in the name of religion. It also denounces terrorism in unambiguous words apart from showing the circumstances in which

ordinary citizens become terrorists. In the midst of growing prejudice against Muslims and the menace of terrorism, *Dhoka* is a timely film.

Anurag Kashyap's *Black Friday*, is based on S. Hussain Zaidi's book of the same name.⁵⁹ It narrated the story of the 1993 serial blasts in Bombay and pointed out that the causes of the bombings were rooted in communal riots that took place after the Babri Masjid demolition. In these riots Muslims were prime victims, leading to the growth of a sense of alienation among a section of the community. The Pakistani state's intelligence agency, the ISI, capitalized on this sentiment with the help of a network of Mumbai's underworld run by 'Muslim dons'. Rajkumar Gupta's *Aamir* showed how a Muslim doctor is blackmailed by 'Muslim terrorists' into planting a bomb. However, the film portrays the liberal humanist Muslim doctor as choosing to save the innocent people in Mumbai rather than his family, which was abducted by the Muslim terrorists. *Hijack* (2008) bluntly showed 'Muslim terrorists' as hijackers. On the other hand, both *New York* (2009) and *Kurbaan* (2009) is set against the backdrop of terrorist attacks in the United States of America, where the (Indian) Muslim protagonist is also shown as the terrorist mastermind in a foreign country.⁶⁰

Neeraj Pandey's *A Wednesday!* was, however, more complex and offers several nuances. The film is replete with the victimhood of a common man engulfed by the tragedy of terrorism just as one often becomes a natural victim to other forms of tragedies such as flood or communal riots as asserted by the protagonist of the film, Naseeruddin Shah. The film **(p.121)** shows a crisis of representation of the common man who is not offered a solution by the state in tackling terrorism. Thus, one feels betrayed by the system and himself takes the responsibility to wipe out terrorists since the representatives of the common man in various apparatuses of the state fail to do so. The film shows a Muslim anti-terrorist squad (ATS) officer, Arif Khan (Jimmy Shergill), and all the four dreaded terrorists shown in the film are also Muslims: Ibrahim Khan, Ikhtlaque Ahmed, Mohammad Zaheer, and Khurshid Lala. However, the identity of the common man depicted by Naseeruddin Shah is not disclosed since, in a name one reveals his religious identity and motive as pointed out by Mumbai police commissioner, Prakash Rathod (Anupam Kher), the narrator in the film. Naseeruddin Shah's character asserts that his religion has nothing to do with his violent acts of first compelling the state to hand over four terrorists by threatening bomb blasts in the city and then killing those terrorists with sophisticated technologies. Although a common Indian citizen can identify with the angst of the common man against terrorism and the failure of the state to curb the problem, the politics of violence that the film projects is problematic. The film showed that the state subtly supports the violent method of eliminating terrorists. This violent politics to tackle terrorism is, in fact, a dominant view of the state. Thus, coercive and repressive practices have always been at the forefront of the political agenda of the state to fight the menace of terrorism in place of new and creative ways such as a proper diagnosis of the problem

related to socio-economic and cultural alienation of vast sectors of the population and rethinking about their appropriate solutions.

In *D-Day* (2013), we find that the prime antagonist of the film, the D-company syndicate leader Iqbal Seth aka Goldman, resembles Dawood Ibrahim. In this film, one can notice the struggle between the anti-national 'bad' Muslim and the patriotic 'good' Muslim—Wali Khan (Irrfan Khan), a secret RAW agent operating in Pakistan to capture Goldman. In the film, Wali sacrifices his life for his RAW colleagues. Several other films such as *A Wednesday* (2008), *Aamir* (2008), and *Baby* (2015) employ this trope of juxtaposing the 'bad Muslim', with his anti-national credentials and a dubious, disloyal, and uncertain belonging to the Indian nation-state, and the 'good patriotic Muslim', who fights for the security of the same Indian nation-state.

In contrast, Nishikant Kamath's *Mumbai Meri Jaan* (2008) had a message against the politics of violence and counter-violence, against the **(p.122)** politics of revenge and counter-revenge that has produced several communal riots and characterized the post-colonial period in our nation's history. The film portrayed the traumatic experiences of several citizens after the Mumbai train blasts in 2006. It raised several questions not only about the incompetence of the police in tracking down the perpetrators, but it also tried to question the prejudiced mindset against viewing Muslims as suspected terrorists. However, the film did not show any 'Muslim victims' of the train blasts, which is expected from a mature film-maker. Like many common innocent citizens, numerous Muslims also became casualties of several terrorist attacks; thus, it is expected that a film on terrorist attacks would show a 'Muslim victim' instead of pandering to the dominant trend of characterizing Muslims as only 'terrorists'. Terrorism has no religion and it has nothing to do with any specific community. So, it is incredibly unjust to portray only Muslims as terrorists. This is undoubtedly a one-dimensional, communally stereotyped, and biased representation of Muslims.

If we follow Bollywood we will find that most films make a direct connection between terrorism and Islam and Muslims. The only exceptions are Gulzar's *Maachis* (1996), which dealt with Sikh militancy or the Khalistan movement in the Punjab of the 1980s, Mani Ratnam's *Dil Se* (1998), which showed insurgency in the North-East, Govind Nihalani's *Drohkaal* (1994), Gaganvihari Borate's *Lal Salaam* (2002), Prakash Jha's *Chakravyuh* (2012), which narrated the story of Maoist violence, Shoojit Sircar's *Madras Cafe*, which focused on the terrorist assaults of Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), and Mani Shankar's *Tango Charlie* (2005), which showed the Indian army's encounters with terrorists in the North-East and Kashmir. *Tango Charlie* also showed the military fighting the Naxals in Andhra Pradesh and combating the riots in Gujarat. Terrorism has no religion and kills both Muslims and non-Muslims. Also, it is a well-known fact that numerous terrorist groups have their organizational base among many non-

Muslims as well. Therefore, the dominant trend of Bollywood in showing the demonized characters of 'Muslim terrorists', and not 'Muslim victims' of terrorism, is unfair.

The Muslim Gangster of the Underworld

The other processes of mythification and mystification of Muslim representation in Hindi cinema takes place through the portrayal of a **(p.123)** direct relationship between Muslims and the criminal world. Showing such connection between crime and Muslims is a way in which forms of pre-liberalization Hindi cinema are carried on to the post-liberalization phase. In the post-liberalization period, Bollywood's obsession with gangsters is evident as one can see how feature films are based on events from Dawood Ibrahim's real life such as Ram Gopal Varma's *Company* (2002) and *D* (2005), which, together with *Satya* (1998), are considered to be part of an Indian gangster trilogy. Varma also directed an Indian adaptation of *The Godfather* in a Mumbai underworld setting *Sarkar* (2005) and its sequel *Sarkar Raj* (2008). Rishi Kapoor's role in *Agneepath* (2012) as Rauf Lala, an Afghan underworld don who runs a meat business and simultaneously deals in drugs and prostitution, is another prominent case of depicting the Muslim underworld lord. A recent biopic on both Haji Mastan and Dawood Ibrahim is Milan Luthria's *Once Upon a Time in Mumbai* (2010) and the sequel *Once Upon a Time in Mumbai Dobaara!* (2013). *D-Day* (2013) is also a fictional story about Dawood Ibrahim, who is depicted as currently based in Karachi. Similarly, other films loosely based on Dawood's life and various criminal activities of his D-company are *Jannat* (2007), where he is portrayed as Abu Ibrahim, the cricket match-fixer, *Black Friday* (2007), *Shootout at Lokhandwala* (2007), and its prequel, *Shootout at Wadala* (2013), based on crime journalist S. Hussain Zaidi's latest book, *Dongri to Dubai*.

The theme of Indian mafia, particularly the Mumbai underworld, has been present in Bollywood since the 1950s, evolving into a distinct genre known as 'Mumbai noir' in the late 1990s. In some of the earliest films from the 1950s, such as Raj Kapoor's *Awaara* (1951) and *Shree 420* (1955), the underworld was a background presence. Later on, Shakti Samanta's *China Town* (1962) starring Shammi Kapoor, and Prakash Mehra's *Zanjeer* (1973) starring Amitabh Bachchan and Pran dealt with the criminal underworld. In the 1970s, there were some films in which the mafia was not featured in the background; in these the underworld don emerged as a protagonist. One can mention the success of cult films such as Yash Chopra's *Deewar* (1975) portraying Haji Mastan, Chandra Barot's *Don* (1978), and Vijay Anand's *Ram Balram* (1980) in the list of such movies. In the late 1980s, parallel cinema filmmakers began producing more realistic films dealing with crime such as Saeed Akhtar Mirza's *Salim Langde Pe Mat Ro* (1989). **(p.124)** Mani Ratnam's Tamil film *Nayagan* (1987), based on the life of the Mumbai don Varadarajan Mudaliar, portrayed by Kamal Haasan, was remade in Hindi with Vinod Khanna as the protagonist in *Dayavan* (1988). The Mumbai underworld was also depicted in Mira Nair's Academy Award-

nominated Hindi film *Salaam Bombay!* (1988). The underworld was also depicted in several other hit films, including Vidhu Vinod Chopra's *Parinda* (1989) starring Anil Kapoor, Mukul Anand's *Agneepath* (1990) starring Amitabh Bachchan, and Sudhir Mishra's *Dharavi* (1991) and *Is Raat Ki Subah Nahin* (1996). Mahesh Manjrekar's *Vaastav* (1999) along with Anurag Basu's *Gangster* (2006) also focused on the Indian mafia. Hansal Mehta's *Dil Pe Mat Le Yaar* (2000) was a more light-hearted film about the Mumbai underworld.

In Kaizad Gustad's *Boom* (2003), the most prominent gangsters in Dubai and Mumbai are Muslims. In Vishal Bhardwaj's *Maqbool* (2004), Muslims run the Mumbai underworld—don Jahangir Khan alias Abbaji (Pankaj Kapoor), Jahangir's right-hand man, Miyan Maqbool (Irfan Khan), and another criminal, Riyaz Boti (Ankur Vikal). Milan Luthria's *Once Upon a Time in Mumbaai* (2010) attempts to show a 'good underworld don' in Sultan Mirza (dramatized character of Haji Mastan, played by Ajay Devgn) and a 'bad underworld don' in Shoaib Khan (dramatized character of Dawood Ibrahim, played by Emraan Hashmi). However, in the eyes of the police officer Agnel Wilson (Randeep Hooda), symbolizing the law and the state, both Mirza and Khan are 'wrong people'. The film is a celebration of the Robin Hood-like image of the underworld don, and a commentary on the state's inability to check and regulate the black economy. On the trope of celebration of underworld dons, a film commentator points out, '[t]he very fact that the two villains of *Agneepath* (2012) have become the talking point, catching a stronghold of audience imagination, announces a loud comeback of the villains in Bollywood cinema.'⁶¹

In this context, Prakash Jha's *Apaharan* (2005) was markedly different in the setting of the film in a typical small town of the Hindi heartland in Bihar-Uttar Pradesh rather than the urban metropolis of Mumbai. Similar genres of crime films based on small north-Indian cities are Vishal Bharadwaj's *Omkara* (2006), Kabeer Kaushik's *Sehar* (2005), Ashu Trikha's *Baabarr* (2009), and Anand Kumar's *Zilla* (p.125) *Ghaziabad* (2013).⁶² *Apaharan* shows villain Tabrez Alam (Nana Patekar) as sporting a beard, wearing Muslim caps, and as a religious person even if he is a criminal don, an oft-repeated stereotype of Indian Muslims in Bollywood films. It, however, tries to balance such stereotypical portrayal of Indian Muslims with difficulty by including a supporting character of an honest superintendent of police (SP), Anwar Khan (Mukesh Tiwari). The film subtly promotes the Hindutva assertion against the Muslims, through the dialogue of a local trader, Seth Surajmal, in the wake of a businessman's kidnapping from the local market. Surajmal says, 'Before you Mr Khan, there was another IPS officer, Balbir Singh, who had controlled the law and order situation very well to the extent that the MLA Tabrez Alam's gang was almost non-existent. But after you took charge, there have been 13 kidnappings in 3 months', hinting at the Muslim connection between both Tabrez Alam and SP Anwar Khan. In fact, Tabrez Alam transferred SP Anwar Khan (a clean-shaved police officer) to his area precisely because he expected that this Muslim officer would help him in carrying out his

criminal activities. But Anwar Khan is an honest police officer and, in fact, opposes Tabrez's criminal empire. Although the film shows the death of 'evil' Tabrez Alam, it stops short of punishing other corrupt politicians such as Dinkar Pandey (the home minister, who carries out routine bribery in police recruitment). If films can be seen as part of the 'ideological state apparatuses', to use Althusser's term, justifying the ideological hegemony of the ruling classes, then the contours of Bihar's politics were shown in this film with a casteist and communal overtone, currently dominant in Bihar.

In Vishal Bhardwaj's *Ishqiya* (2010), the Muslim protagonists, Iftikhar aka Khalujaan (Naseeruddin Shah) and Razzak Hussain aka Babban (Arshad Warsi), are noted criminals and kidnappers while their boss, Mushtaq Bhai (Salman Shahid), is a don in north India. Similarly, in Anurag Kashyap's *Gangs of Wasseypur I and II* (2012) the conflict between the Muslim gangs of Pathans and Qureshis in the coal belts of erstwhile Bihar and present Jharkhand are shown. Noted criminals such (p.126) as Rashid Ali (Ravi Kishen) and Faqeera (Sunil Grover) are portrayed as Muslims in *Zilla Ghaziabad* (2013). The films on Muslim gangsters not only include the Muslim mafia don as the main protagonist, but it also dangerously celebrates the stardom of the Muslim gangsters. Most films on crime portray either some supporting characters who are Muslim dons or there are prominent Muslim gangsters. In contrast, there are very few gangster films in Bollywood where Muslims are portrayed as cops. Except ACP (assistant commissioner of police) Shamsheer Khan played by Sanjay Dutt (role based on IPS officer Aftab Ahmed Khan) in *Shootout at Lokhandwala* (2007), ACP Afaaque Baagraan (based on India's first encounter cop Isaque Bagwan) in *Shootout at Wadala* (2013), and CBI officer Waseem Khan played by Manoj Bajpayee in *Special 26* (2013), one can hardly remember a prominent role of a Muslim cop in any recently made Hindi crime thriller. Incidentally, all the above-mentioned three films are based on real events of shooting between the police and gangsters in Mumbai. On his experience of playing the role of the encounter cop Isaque Bagwan, actor Anil Kapoor said in an interview, 'In the entire 40-odd years of my life, this is incidentally my first-ever Muslim character. He will go down in history as the first encounter cop of Mumbai. [He] is upright and honest. He loves his city, his country and he's a tough-as-nails cop. And, he is supremely fit!'⁶³ This comment from a prominent actor points to the sad tale about Bollywood where he gets his first ever 'Muslim character' after spending four decades in the industry. This is not to say that there were no attempts to make films with Muslim protagonists along with an overtly secular message in Bollywood. The next section of this chapter will analyse such films that have a secular tone in the post-liberalization period and discuss the limits of such movies.

Secular Themes: Limits and Limitations

In the context of the rising tide of the Hindutva form of communal chauvinism in national politics throughout the 1990s, the production of the 'Muslim other' was more common in Bollywood cinema. **(p.127)** But certainly, some films were exceptional in dealing with the issue of Muslim marginalization. Rajkumar Santoshi's *China Gate* (1998) was markedly different from his previous film, *Ghatak* (1996) which depicted communal stereotypes and negative roles for Muslims. *China Gate* brilliantly posited a dialogue between two army officers—Colonel Puri, played by Amrish Puri, and Major Sarfaraz Khan, played by Naseeruddin Shah, both of whom faced the trauma of communal riots. The use of *dialogue* becomes a mechanism of friendship among them. Colonel Puri, whose family was a victim of the Partition riots in 1947, and Major Sarfaraz Khan, whose brother was burnt alive in the Meerut riots, exchange their grief and experiences of communal conflicts, which helps to resolve the problem of Colonel Puri's hatred and mistrust against the entire Muslim community. This dialogue between Colonel Puri and Major Sarfaraz Khan can be viewed as a solution proposed by the director to resolve the differences not only between individuals but between two communities—Hindus and Muslims—to overcome the problem of communalism, hatred, and mistrust. The film's director, Santoshi, interestingly hinted that it was the majority community in India that had problems of suspicion and hatred towards the minorities. In fact, *China Gate* portrayed a secular, patriotic, mature, sensible, and sensitive character in Major Sarfaraz Khan. *China Gate* is also significant for representing the pan-Indian character of the Indian army, and more importantly, in giving a prominent role to a person hailing from the Northeast, Major Gurung played by Danny Denzongpa. There is no denying the fact that the Northeast has been the most neglected category both regarding cinematic themes and the portrayal as protagonists, even more so than the 'Missing Muslim'.

The theme of secularism can also be found in some big-budget films such as *Main Hoon Na*, *Lakshya*, and *Dev*—all released in 2004 as observed by film critic Sudhanva Deshpande.⁶⁴

According to Deshpande, this is a significant trend if one compares it with the pattern of communal stereotypes and negative roles of Muslim characters in Bollywood cinema of the late 1980s and early 1990s.⁶⁵

Govind Nihalani's *Dev* (2004) tried to depict the complicated relationship between majority and minority communalism who feed **(p.128)** on each other in the backdrop of police high-handedness, a suspicious socio-political environment, and religious extremism in Mumbai. *Dev* metaphorically featured the death of Gandhian ideals with the death of Farhan's (played by Fardeen Khan) father, Ali Sahab (Pramod Moutho), a bearded and religious Muslim who had deep faith in the Gandhian principles of nonviolence and harmony in an age of communal conflicts. *Dev* also portrayed the problem of an educated Muslim

who develops a minority complex and anxiety on the one hand, and deep-rooted anger over the system on the other, in the communal atmosphere in which he grows up. But *Dev* also featured an optimistic and liberating transition—Farhan progressing from being the jihadi militant to a secular Muslim going to practice law in the court. *Dev* was significant for yet another reason—the characterization of a daring Muslim woman (Aliya in the movie), played by Kareena Kapoor, who speaks up against state-sponsored riots and exposes the political bankruptcies of both majority and minority communalism.

Like *Dev*, which deals with the issue of communal riots, the film *Parzania* (2007), directed by Rahul Dholakia, portrayed the victimization of Muslims in the 2002 genocide of Gujarat. It is important to note that while in the communal riots of Mumbai and the genocide in Gujarat, Muslims were the targeted victims, they were not focused upon as the chief protagonists in these films. In *Dev*, Amitabh Bachchan played the main role of Dev Pratap Singh, a senior police official, while Fardeen Khan (Farhan) and Kareena Kapoor (Aliya), who played the role of a Muslim couple, were treated as supporting actors. In *Parzania* too Raj Zutshi's character as Asif and Sheeba Chadda's character as Nikhat are supporting roles. Although *Parzania* is based on a true story and is a bold film in many respects, we have to consider its significant limitation in only reaching multiplex audiences due to the usage of English dialogues. Surprisingly, the film portrays how a middle-class Parsi family was trapped in the midst of communal genocide in Gujarat where Muslims were the major victims. Moreover, regarding the representation of Muslims in the film, almost all the Muslim male characters are shown as sporting beards and wearing caps while all the female characters have their heads covered with chaddars or headscarves. One may ask the question as to when Bollywood will show a true story of Muslim victimization during communal riots with Muslim protagonists but without stereotyping them.

(p.129) Barring some informative and well-made documentaries such as Anand Patwardhan's *Ram Ke Naam* (1991) and Rakesh Sharma's *Final Solution* (2003), no feature film could show the haunting horrors of communal campaigns in the early 1990s and the state-sponsored Gujarat genocide in 2002 with intense research and factual correctness. In this respect, among the films based on the theme of secularism in the backdrop of communal conflicts, Aparna Sen's *Mr. and Mrs. Iyer* (2002) portrays a liberal modern Muslim protagonist—Raja (Jehangir) Chowdhury, a professional wildlife photographer, superbly played by Rahul Bose. *Mr. and Mrs. Iyer* was a positive portrayal of a Muslim protagonist but its English script limits its viewing to a selected audience. British director Danny Boyle's Oscar-winning movie, *Slumdog Millionaire* (2008), is yet another film that has an English script but with a Muslim protagonist. The film is an adaptation of Vikas Swarup's novel *Q and A* (2005). It shows the Muslim protagonist, Jamal Malik, an ordinary employee, serving tea in a call centre, whose childhood experience in Mumbai slums bear the trauma of post-Babri demolition riots, in which his mother lost her life. Jamal is raised with his

brother Salim in the streets of many Indian cities; Salim moves to the crime world of Mumbai by joining the gang of Javed Khan, the film's main antagonist. The movie was dubbed *Slumdog Crorepati* in Hindi and was released in India along with the original English version. The movie has made several misrepresentations⁶⁶ and oversimplifications with an unbelievable plot⁶⁷ that reinforces Bollywood stereotypes of the rags to riches story. Nonetheless, the movie aptly showed the urban poverty of Indian Muslims in Mumbai's underbelly in the context of liberalization.

Rakeysh Omprakash Mehra's *Rang De Basanti* (2006) also features a Muslim character, Aslam, played by Kunal Kapoor, but again highlights the Muslim stereotype of a bearded figure. It should be borne in mind that keeping a beard is not a *farz*, that is, it is not compulsory in Islam. This continuous portrayal of a bearded Muslim only reinforces the fact that Bollywood cinema has always tried to impose specific cultural symbols on minority characters, which gives both a sense of **(p.130)** recognition of the distinct cultural identity of the 'Muslim other' and the *identification* of that 'other'. It only problematically indicates that without a beard or a cap, the portrayal of any Muslim character is incomplete. Nonetheless, the film was an impressive statement against the Hindutva brand of communal-chauvinist politics, besides showing how all the protagonists fight a corrupt system. Previously, while analysing *Dev*, we have seen the transition of a jihadi activist into a secular, patriotic Muslim. In *Rang De Basanti*, we see the similar transition of a Hindutva activist (played by Atul Kulkarni) into a secular personality. Moreover, Aslam was a 'good boy who takes care of his mother by visiting her regularly', as claimed by Mitro (Kirron Kher), the mother of a Punjabi boy (Aamir Khan) in the film. Mitro also suggests that she is the mother of the entire gang of friends having distinct religio-cultural backgrounds. Here, Kirron Kher's character becomes the symbol of the Indian nation-state and the protagonists are all friends thus depicting communal harmony. Aslam as the 'good boy' is a positive portrayal of a Muslim character. The film does not shy away from raising questions about minority insecurity and the ghetto mentality harboured by a section of Muslims with communal underpinnings in their imagination; this is done through the depiction of short roles of Aslam's father Amanullah Khan (Om Puri) and his brother, who urge Aslam not to make friends with people from other (*gair*) communities. The film also shows Sue, the English friend of the five youngsters, DJ or Daljit, Karan, Sukhi, Aslam, and Sonia making an amateur documentary on the unsung heroes of the Indian freedom movement. DJ plays the role of Chandrasekhar Azad, Karan is Bhagat Singh, Sukhi is Rajguru, Sonia is Durga Bhabhi, and, given Aslam's 'Islamic roots', he is Ashfaqullah Khan.⁶⁸ The film, at the same time, proposes a 'new nationalism' by embracing 'a pan-Indian patriotism, based on a shared notion of the motherland', coinciding with the dreams of a new generation that sells India as an emergent global power within the context of India's economic liberalization, the information revolution, and militarization.⁶⁹

(p.131) In Rakesh Batra's *Lunchbox* (2013), Aslam Sheikh (Nawazuddin Siddiqui) is an orphan who chose his name. He has learned various things in his life by himself. Sheikh joins a government office as an apprentice after working in a hotel in Saudi Arabia. He lives in Dongri after shifting from Mohammad Ali Road. Both localities are known as areas in Mumbai where the concentration of Muslims is high. He complains to his immediate senior Sajan Fernandez (Irrfan Khan) that in Saudi Arabia there is no entertainment. One just has to work and pray five times. Sheikh loves Mehrunnisa who stays with him before marriage. Their live-in relationship eventually turns into a marriage when the entire extended family of Mehrunnisa attends the wedding. Sheikh's character is free of any stereotype that we have discussed earlier in this chapter. However, in the film, Sheikh is not the primary protagonist but only a supporting character, which takes us back to the argument of the 'Missing Muslim'. Similarly, in Gauri Shinde's *Dear Zindagi* (2016), Shah Rukh Khan as Dr Jehangir Khan is portrayed as a secular person. He is a psychiatrist and is based in Goa. He comes from an educated family and had married a foreigner but separated from his wife. In other words, he is free of any stereotype that we have discussed earlier in this chapter. Also, the character of Fatima (Fatty in the film) is devoid of any religious stereotyping and instead is similar to a mainstream middle-class professional. However, both Dr Jehangir Khan and Fatima's roles are not that of the main protagonist but were supporting roles, as in the case of Aslam Sheikh.

In order to showcase secular themes, there have also been a set of films that concentrated on romantic love relationships between Hindus and Muslims where the Muslim woman is either married or loved by the macho Hindu man. The next section of this chapter will discuss such films.

The Submissive Muslim Woman

In keeping with the trope of showing romantic love relationships and inter-religious marriages to highlight the secular ethos of the country, a number of films were released after liberalization. In these films, the Muslim woman is sometimes portrayed as expressing anger against her Hindu lover and revolting against the conservative strictures of the Muslim community by eloping with her Hindu boyfriend; yet, in effect, **(p.132)** she becomes a submissive woman in contrast to her macho Hindu partner. In the post-liberalization phase, the first film of this kind which convincingly featured Hindu-Muslim romance was perhaps Mani Ratnam's *Bombay* (1995), where a Tamil Muslim village girl elopes and marries a Hindu man from her neighbourhood and then settles down in Bombay, but only until the cosmopolitan and tolerant image of the city became tarnished during the communal riots following the demolition of the Babri Masjid on 6 December 1992.⁷⁰ On the film, a commentator argues:

The movie *Bombay* in 1995 redefined the contours of the characterization of the Muslims in Bollywood films. Set in the backdrop of the 1993 Mumbai bomb blasts, this movie had a strong message of communal harmony even

as it showed the protagonist, a Muslim girl, eloping with a Hindu boy. This was a watershed of sorts as it also depicted the changing face of the Indian society.⁷¹

Zakhm (1998), an autobiographical film by Mahesh Bhatt, narrates the personal story of a Bollywood music director in the backdrop of communal tensions during the riots after the demolition of the Babri Masjid. In the film, Pooja Bhatt is portrayed as the Muslim mother of a Hindu musician, Ajay Desai, played by Ajay Devgn, while his brother Anand is a Hindutva activist. But the Muslim identity of Mrs Desai (Ajay's mother) is hidden and only disclosed near the climax. Moreover, Pooja Bhatt as a Muslim woman protagonist is the 'other woman', a *rakhael* or the kept woman, of a film director cum producer, Raman Desai (Nagarjuna). Raman is dominated by his deeply conservative and orthodox mother, who strictly follows Hindu rites and rituals. Since the film is purportedly based on a real-life story, one can hardly suggest that the representation of Pooja Bhatt's character is exaggerated. The film also features a daring Muslim journalist, Anwar Hashmi (Madan Jain), who is shown without the stereotypical cultural symbols of the beard and cap as discussed earlier. Isa Bhai, Ajay's neighbour, a role played by Avtar Gill was, however, recognized as a religious person with a beard and cap but whose forefathers were all freedom fighters. Avtar Gill's character in the film also symbolized the helplessness of the minorities who were targeted and threatened by the Hindutva forces, urging them to leave the country. The film was a brilliant exposition of communal **(p. 133)** harmony and it upheld secular principles and the need to fight reactionary Hindutva forces.

Latif Binny's *Dahek* (1999) shows how a Muslim girl, Neelima aka Neelu (Sonali Bendre), elopes with her Hindu lover, Samir Roshan aka Prince (Akshaye Khanna). This elopement causes Hindu-Muslim strife in the city. The political leaders from both the communities exploit such a communal polarization. Neelu's eldest uncle, Jabbar Bakshi (Danny Denzongpa), the family head, who was jailed for killing his brother-in-law Iqbal for eloping with his sister, also jumps in to create more tensions in the city. In such communal frenzy, many innocent lives are lost. A similar plot is used in Habib Faisal's *Ishaqzaade* (2012), where Parma (Arjun Kapoor) is the reckless grandson of a Hindu chauvinist patriarch, Surya Chauhan, and secretly marries Zoya (Parineeti Chopra), a religious Muslim girl from a political family. In order to marry Zoya, Parma converts to Islam and changes his name to Pervez. However, after sleeping with Zoya, he reveals that he has tricked Zoya into marrying him and dumps her to take revenge against her family and the humiliation she had caused him by slapping him when he misbehaved with her. While Parma joins his family in a celebration of 'becoming a man', being devastated and outraged, Zoya invades to shoot Parma. However, she is intercepted by Parma's mother, Parvati (Natasha Rastogi), who urges her to calm down. In the meantime, Zoya's father sends his men after the couple. In the heat of the moment, Chauhan shoots

Parma's mother when she tries to defend her son and daughter-in-law from the bloodthirsty families. Parma realizes his mistake and protects Zoya from being murdered by his family. Parma and Zoya flee from their murderous families and take refuge in the brothel of Chand Bibi (Gauher Khan), who loves Parma. The two rival families conclude that Parma and Zoya's marriage is a serious blow to their respective religious communities and political careers. As a result, they decide to kill the couple by joining forces. Parma and Zoya take refuge on a terrace, engaging in a gunfire battle. Finally, the two shoot each other willingly while smilingly embracing death in each other's arms. The movie ends with Parma and Zoya's bodies lying on the terrace, and an on-screen message explaining how lovers like them are killed each year, only because of falling in love outside their caste and religion.

Shyam Benegal's *Zubeida* (2001)—set against the backdrop of the pre-Partition politics of princely states also portrays the protagonist, **(p.134)** Zubeida (Karishma Kapoor), a Muslim singer married to a Rajput prince, Maharaja Vijayendra Singh (Manoj Bajpai), as a submissive Muslim woman in contrast to her macho Hindu husband. In this movie, though the protagonist is a Muslim woman, she is portrayed as the 'other woman' and the second wife of the prince, whose first wife, Maharani Mandira Devi (Rekha), plays an important role in matters of politics. In this film, Zubeida was portrayed as the beautiful young wife of the prince, while the more mature first wife, Rekha, a Rajput lady, had a superior stature and the status of being not only older than the Muslim wife but also the 'first lady'. If we follow the film closely, it is obvious that the character of Zubeida was no less than a 'kept woman' with only a marital tag on her.

Anand Rai and Himanshu Sharma's *Raanjhanaa* (2013) shows a Tamil Brahmin boy, Kundan Shankar (Dhanush), madly in love with a Muslim girl, Zoya (Sonam Kapoor). Kundan is so desperate that he almost chases and stalks the girl to the University of Delhi. On the other hand, Zoya loves a student leader from Jawaharlal Nehru University, Akram Zaidi (Abhay Deol). However, Zaidi is actually not a Muslim and belongs to a Sikh family, whose non-Muslim identity (Jasjeet Singh Shergill) is discovered and revealed by Kundan on the day of Zoya's wedding with Zaidi. As a result, Zoya's wedding is disrupted causing her to attempt suicide. Zoya had convinced Jasjeet to portray himself as a Muslim in front of her parents to marry her. On the other hand, Kundan backs out from marrying his childhood friend, Bindiya (Swara Bhaskar), as he is still in love with Zoya. The film shows that after the death of Jasjeet, Kundan still desires to have Zoya as a life partner even while he lies dying in the intensive care unit of a hospital. In this film, as in all others discussed in this section of this chapter, it is interesting to note that it is only the Hindu macho men who have married Muslim women. In fact, in the films that are often showcased for portraying Indo-Pak unity such as Randhir Kapoor's *Heena* (1991) and Yash Chopra's *Veer Zara* (2004) the Hindu Indian man is depicted as being in love with a Pakistani Muslim woman. Films such as *Agent Vinod* (2012) and *Ek Tha Tiger* (2012) only

reproduce the same narrative of *Heena* and *Veer Zaara* by replacing ordinary Pakistani women with Pakistani ISI spies in love with RAW(Indian Research and Analysis Wing) agents. However, these two films along with *Ishaqzaade* (2012) and *Raanjhanaa* (p.135) (2013) reinforce the hierarchy between the genders (male-female), between the communities (Hindu-Muslim), and between nations (India-Pakistan).⁷²

Although, in reality, hundreds of Muslim men marry non-Muslim women, rarely any Hindi film shows such a plot. Except for Karan Johar's *My Name Is Khan* (2010),⁷³ hardly any famous Hindi film has shown a Muslim man marrying a Hindu woman. However, one must not forget that *My Name Is Khan* was a hit because it cashed in on the stardom of Shah Rukh Khan (who is married to a Hindu woman, Gauri, in real life) rather than the actual plot of the film. At best, in many popular Hindi films, the Muslim man will harbour one-sided love for a Hindu woman, who will choose to marry not the Muslim man but a Hindu man as seen in a pre-liberalization era film such as *Muqaddar ka Sikandar* (1978). In that film, the protagonist: Sikandar (Amitabh Bachchan) 'is a poor orphan who is treated shabbily by society ... spurns the love of Zohrabai (Rekha), kills Dilawar (Amjad Khan) and even sacrifices his own life to make his 'memsahib' (Raakhee) happy'.⁷⁴ The continuous portrayal of submissive Muslim women marrying or falling in love with macho Hindu men is either a conscious or unconscious Hindutva desire among Bollywood filmmakers to have patriarchal control over the body of the Muslim woman. It is through the control over the Muslim woman's body that the desire to control the Muslim community is exposed, since, in effect, the womb of the Muslim woman is instrumental in reproducing the Muslim community. In fact, a commentator has argued that Bollywood since the 1990s has been engaged with a process of 'othering' the Muslim minorities, where Hindi cinema's portrayal of the image of Muslims has been pejorative and which stems from the strong grounding of its stories in a (p.136) Hindu majoritarian context.⁷⁵ Such a process is actually the product of politically motivated and manipulated majoritarian cultural assertion, reflected in the Hindu right's clamour to underline the significance of drawing the geographic and cultural boundaries of what its ideologues call the 'Hindu Rashtra'.⁷⁶

Lipstick under My Burkha (2017) and *Secret Superstar* (2017) highlight the negotiations and protests of the submissive Muslim housewife against patriarchal norms and domestic violence. In this regard, these are welcome themes. However, both films foreground the burqa as the sole symbol signifying Muslim women. Interestingly, the burqa while serving the purpose of anonymity and privacy also becomes an agent of liberation for the Muslim protagonists in these two films. But, at the same time, both films show that the burqa is the only hindrance that the Muslim woman has to overcome. No doubt, the burqa is an issue but there are other issues such as health, education, and employment of Muslim women too, which need careful consideration by film-makers and policy-makers alike while dealing with the problems of Muslim women. In the midst of

several stereotypes and subtle desires in Hindi cinema that have been discussed so far, let us now look at some meaningful representations of Indian Muslims in a few films that have handled the issue of Muslim identity and the problems of the Muslim minorities with a sensitive and progressive message.

Representing Indian Muslims: In Search of Meaningful Cinema

In representing Indian Muslims, some film-makers associated with the new cinema genre tried to address the Muslim question in Bollywood by blending it with new radicalism. In this regard, Masud observes:

After the 1970s, the Muslim social gradually petered out because it no longer met the urgent need of harsher times. The one film which drove home this message was M.S. Sathyu's *Garam Hawa*, released in the early 1970s that grippingly captured the human tragedy of India's Partition. **(p. 137)** Although it dealt ostensibly with the travails of a Muslim family in UP [United provinces] at the time of Partition, it was a reflection on the tragedy inflicted on Indian Muslims by the Partition. The reflection was a product of bitter post-Partition introspection. But it was touched by compassion and humanity.⁷⁷

In agreement with Masud, one must also note that *Garam Hawa* (1973), besides brilliantly capturing the theme of the 'Muslim social', also hinted that one might treat the Muslim question in India from a class perspective as was later done in *Salim Langde Pe Mat Ro* (1989). *Garam Hawa* is an adaptation of Ismat Chughtai's short story by noted Urdu poet and lyricist Kaifi Azmi and the screenplay was written jointly by Kaifi Azmi and Sathyu's wife, Shama Zaidi, with Kaifi Azmi adding the dialogues to the film. The film showed the loyalty of its Muslim protagonists Salim Mirza (Balraj Sahni) and his son Sikandar Mirza (Farooq Shaikh) for their own country, India, rather than the newly created Pakistan even after experiencing prolonged communal hatred, mistrust, and suspicion besides losing their dear ones. Finally, when they were compelled to decide to move to Pakistan, the fascinating climax of *Garam Hawa* showed its protagonists on the way to the railway station, coming across a left organization's rally demanding food and employment. The rally proclaimed the unity of all the dispossessed and raised the demands of the dispossessed regardless of religion or caste. Salim Mirza's family is shown abandoning its emigration plan by joining the rally. The climax of the film also symbolically portrayed the denouncement of alienation, isolation, and ghettoization of Indian Muslims, and the need to stand in solidarity with all the dispossessed while raising the slogan of *inquilaab zindabad* (long live the revolution). It is this portrayal of the dispossessed, deprived, marginalized, discriminated, and excluded victims rallying under a left-wing political platform, while acknowledging the fact that Muslims *also* form a dispossessed social group in India, which makes *Garam Hawa* very distinct from any other Hindi film. Thus, *Garam Hawa* symbolically sends the unique political message that Indian

Muslims need to rally behind a progressive political project to raise their legitimate demands **(p.138)** and address their sociopolitical and economic grievances along with the workers and the unemployed.

Dastak (1970), a film by Rajinder Singh Bedi, is known for its exceptional storyline set in a red light area, where a newly-wed couple Hamid (Sanjeev Kumar) and Salma (Rehana Sultan) moves to a flat without knowing that the previous occupant of this house was Shamshad Begum (Shakila Bano Bhopali), a famous *mujrawali* (nautch girl) cum prostitute. As a result, their daily turmoil begins with the knocks (*dastak*) on their door from unknown people who come to see Shamshad. The film also shows the poverty of the Muslim family and the genuine housing problem of Muslims in Indian cities.

Saeed Mirza's *Salim Langde Pe Mat Ro* was set in the backdrop of Hindutva mobilization in the 1980s, its consequent explosive communal environment, and its impact on the lives of the Muslim youth in Mumbai. Hindi films rarely scrutinize or afford a closer look at the mind of a Muslim minority without resorting to stereotypes. The film depicts the chief protagonist, Salim (Pawan Malhotra), as a petty criminal, who works to sustain his family of a young unmarried sister, Anees (Nishigandha), a housewife mother, Amina (Surekha Sikri), and an unemployed father (Vikram Gokhale), after the factories are locked out. Thus, Salim, coming from an organized working class background, turns to the world of crime with his friends Peera (Makrand Deshpande) and Abdul (Ashutosh Gowariker) in the absence of any alternative employment opportunities and at a time when communal discrimination would hinder the chance of Salim getting a decent job. Salim visits his lover Mumtaz (Neelima Azeem) in a brothel. In the meantime, Salim's sister is to be married to Aslam (Rajendra Gupta), a progressive Muslim who is opposed to the conservatives within the community. Salim's brother-in-law is an honest person with good morals in the midst of all the rowdy elements in his neighbourhood. He is a proofreader who corrects other's mistakes in an Urdu newspaper. He also corrects Salim's mindset. Under the influence of Aslam, Salim begins to see his world with a larger vision and seeks to find an honest living. However, his old crime rivals and compatriots refuse to let him leave the criminal world. In this regard, the film is a great lesson for the progressives as it teaches us to creatively engage the lumpenproletariat and impart the lesson to them that the easiest thing to do is to become a thug, while the hardest thing to do is to live with dignity. **(p.139)** On commenting upon such a socially sensitive and purposeful cinema, Mujtaba points out that 'movies like *Elan* and *Salim Langde Pe Mat Ro* critiqued the aimlessness of the lower middle-class Muslim youth'.⁷⁸ Similarly, commenting upon Saeed Mirza and his range of parallel cinema, film critic Iqbal Masud argues:

Saeed Akhtar Mirza was part of the New Movement in cinema which rose to prominence from the late 60s onwards. His work has always been marked by an 'adversary element', meaning a critique of the statusquo from a radical point of view.... In his *Salim Langde Pe Mat Ro* he examines the problems of Muslim lumpens in central Bombay.... What is impressive about the film is the multi-layered approach to the subject. It rises beyond its specific city and class and becomes a probing into the condition of Indian Muslims. The gradual economic and educational decline of urban Muslims is portrayed. Also the shift of the young to crime, a flight from a society which they feel rejects them. The problems of communalism, ghetto mentality, and search for an ethnic identity which does not clash with a national identity are also explored.... *Salim* is a complex and reflective work which in itself is a search for identity. Indian Muslims have found a place in the increasingly metropolitan culture of India. *Salim* is an extremely sensitive and intelligent attempt to depict this cultural process. It says there are no easy answers but it also opens up ways of resolving the crisis.⁷⁹

Both *Garam Hawa* and *Salim Langde Pe Mat Ro* portrayed the plight of ordinary Muslims, facing livelihood issues arising out of a lack of economic opportunities in a society marked by communal discrimination. Apart from the identity and security questions, both these films tried to raise the essential questions regarding class dimensions and equity by highlighting how Indian Muslims face the problems of poverty and unemployment. Both these films also captured the victimhood and helplessness of Indian Muslims in a communally charged environment. Responding to such an atmosphere, Saeed Mirza made another classic, *Naseem* (1995). This was one of the very few films that made a bold statement against the Hindutva form of communalism in the 1990s. The film shows an ailing grandfather (Kaifi Azmi) narrating the tales of Hindu-Muslim unity in pre-Partition Agra. The film ends with the **(p.140)** death of the grandfather on the day when the Babri Masjid was demolished, thus metaphorically depicting the death of the secular India to which the grandfather's generation aspired.

It is crucial to discuss Nagesh Kukunoor's *Iqbal* (2005) here as it is one of the very few films that features a 'Muslim protagonist' without any of the stereotypes that have been previously discussed in this chapter. It is also an exceptional and relevant movie due to its appropriate treatment of the particular theme of the 'Muslim social'—depicting the problem of the Muslim peasantry in the era of the agrarian crisis that the country is facing today under a neoliberal policy regime. The film reflects the struggle of an underdog fighting against all the odds of economic hardships and parental pressure of taking up the family tradition of agricultural occupation instead of realizing the protagonist's (Iqbal Khan's) dream of becoming a cricketer. The film brilliantly captures the success story of an ambitious young boy who eventually wins the battle against all

obstacles that come his way—his father’s dislike for cricket, petty politics and discrimination in the sports circuit with unfair selections, and the marginalized existence as a poor and differently abled village boy. Narrating the optimistic treatment of the theme in this film, a film reviewer has thus put things succinctly:

Nagesh Kukunoor’s *Iqbal* not only looks at the sport and the politics that come with it, but the film also tells the story of an underdog who aspires to play on the national level. Convincingly narrated and sensitively handled, *Iqbal* succeeds in touching the core of your heart a number of times in those two hours. Most importantly, *Iqbal* works because you want the underdog, an 18-year-old deaf and mute village boy, to succeed in his endeavour. The youngster rises from the ashes, faces roadblocks at every step, falls time and again, but gets up and reaches the winning post in the end.⁸⁰

Iqbal, through the sensitive portrayal of its Muslim protagonist and its fascinating storyline, metaphorically sends an optimistic message to disadvantaged Indian Muslims stating that it is possible to succeed against the challenges of discrimination and economic difficulties. (p.141) On the other hand, the role of *Iqbal*’s father, Anwar Khan, can be interpreted in the context of his strained relationship with the Indian nation-state. If we metaphorically read cricket (the most watched game in India) as an equivalent of the Indian nation-state, then Anwar Khan’s dislike of the game can be justified in class terms as he thinks that the funds for cricketers should be transferred to poor peasants. Thus, it is a grudge against an elite game from a member of the peasantry who feels that peasants are neglected by the government. Being a Muslim, Anwar Khan also has a legitimate complaint against cricket (metaphor of the Indian nation-state) for his perceived discrimination as a member of the minority community. Finally, the film showed how in the wake of *Iqbal*’s success in cricket (a metaphor of *Iqbal* getting a place in the national mainstream), Anwar Khan resolved his difficult relationship with the game and hence with the nation-state. Thus, the film optimistically showed the mainstreaming of India’s most significant minority group.

Nagesh Kukunoor’s *Dor* (2006) features a positive portrayal of the character of Zeenat (Gul Panag)—an independent, self-assured young woman from Himachal Pradesh, who has lived life on her terms. Her strength of character is evident in the way she lives alone, chooses to marry for love, and is ready to go to any lengths to save her husband’s life. Interestingly, the film also tries to break the stereotype that purdah is typical of a Muslim woman. Instead, the film shows that the veil as a symbol of patriarchy can also be found in the traditional Rajput families of Rajasthan, as shown in the portrayal of Ayesha Takia’s character, Meera. Moreover, the film depicts a poignant tale of compassionate friendship between two women and a dialogue between two distinct cultures. The film

subtly takes note of capital punishment being a part of the rigid conservative structures of Sharia in Saudi Arabia, which is the reason for the death sentence for Zeenat's husband. On the other hand, the traditional patriarchal society of Rajasthan makes the life of a newly widowed Meera miserable as she cannot re-marry due to the strictures of her dead husband's family. The brilliance of this film is that it subtly shows the struggle of two women against conservative patriarchal systems and seeks for the liberation of the victims through their unity and mutual solidarity, symbolized by their caring friendship.

Shimit Amin's *Chak De! India* (2007) not only features a Muslim protagonist, Kabir Khan, played by none other than King Khan of **(p.142)** Bollywood, Shah Rukh Khan, but also brilliantly combines the identities of the most marginalized and disadvantaged groups in India—women, Dalits, tribals, and Muslims, apart from maintaining a balance in regional representation. In fact, one can say that the film metaphorically recommends solidarity among all these excluded and disempowered groups to help build a united people's resistance against imperialism, wherein the Australian team, the superpower in international hockey as portrayed in the film, only becomes a metaphor of imperial power. Moreover, the film also challenges the hegemony of cricket as a popular sport in India besides breaking the dominant perception of a stereotypical Muslim as a traitor and a Pakistan loyalist.

In Rajkumar Hirani's *3 Idiots* (2009), Farhan Qureshi (Madhavan), the narrator of the film and one of the protagonists, leaves engineering to pursue his passion for wildlife photography. According to an independent film-maker and film researcher, Farhan 'does not invoke anything from his religion or cultural identity, and appears as a regular Indian boy aspiring for a successful career'.⁸¹ Imran Qureshi, played by Farhan Akhtar in the Zoya Akhtar-directed *Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara* (2011) is a jolly, fun-loving poet and a copywriter in the advertising industry. Similarly, in Mrighdeep Singh Lamba's *Fukrey* (2013), one of the protagonists, Zafar (Ali Fazal), has a Hindu girlfriend, Priya (Priya Anand), who is a teacher. In the film, Zafar is the son of a Muslim butcher and an aspiring singer from his college days. In *Fukrey Returns* (2017), both Zafar and Priya decide to marry. Farhan in *3 Idiots*, Imran in *Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara*, and Zafar in *Fukrey* are positive portrayals of a new but minuscule Muslim middle-class in India. All three characters are devoid of any of the conventional imaging that we see in many Bollywood films. Political satires such as Abhishek Sharma's *Tere Bin Laden* (2010), is undoubtedly a critical statement against the US 'war on terror' project, which is exclusively and unfairly Muslim-centric. Shyam Benegal's *Well Done Abba* (2010) on the issue of government negligence regarding a drought situation is a welcome theme in addressing the relevant issues and problems of the Muslim minorities in India.

Hansal Mehta's *Shahid* (2013) portrays the real-life events of an intrepid and committed human rights lawyer in Mumbai, Shahid Azmi, who was assassinated by unknown assailants for having taken up cases **(p.143)** for India's wretched—the stereotyped, ghettoized urban poor Muslim community, who are also victims of being so-called terrorist suspects by the state and society at large.⁸² The film ends by informing us that until his death on 11 February 2010,⁸³ in his brief legal career of seven years, Shahid Azmi had made 17 acquittals, a fairly good number in a judicial system that is often described as slow. Until his death, he was successfully fighting several false cases including one of a Muslim man who was being accused of the 26 November 2008 Mumbai terror attacks. The film's producers and directors must be congratulated for taking on such a difficult and sensitive subject while treating it in such a fine manner. Manish Jha's *Anwar* (2007), based on Priyamvad's short story *Phalgun Ki Ek Upkatha*, depicted the victimhood of a Muslim middle-class youth in Lucknow who was suspected of being a terrorist. In the wake of biased suspicion on Muslims as terrorists, a popular Shah Rukh Khan film, *My Name Is Khan* (2010), set the tone for the punch line 'My name is Khan and I am not a terrorist' mouthed by a diasporic Muslim man settled in the United States of America.

However, *Shahid* is an exception in the sense that it had indeed gone deep into the concerned issue while making an authentic, gritty, and raw portrayal of a real-life character apart from addressing the issue of social stigmatization and isolation that Muslims face in the wake of any terror attack. The film shows how Shahid Azmi (Rajkumar Yadav), shaken by the 1993 Mumbai riots escapes to Pakistan occupied Kashmir to join the militants. However, unnerved and disillusioned by the jingoism, extremism, and inhumanity of the militants, he returns to Mumbai and within days is picked up by the police under the strict anti-terror laws such as TADA which are applied to an 'enemy of the state'. In Tihar jail, Shahid is acquainted with a Kashmiri Muslim, Waar Sahab (K.K. Menon), who runs an NGO along with a Panjab University professor. Waar helped Shahid to finish his studies and this prevented the latter from being brainwashed by another Kashmiri militant, Omar Sheikh (Prabal Panjabi). It is interesting to see how the Kashmiri Muslim, Waar Sahab, after being acquitted tells Shahid that 'Indian judiciary works **(p.144)** even if it takes time'. He makes the point that to change the system one needs to be a part of the system. Shahid learns his lessons from Waar Sahab. Coming out of jail after being proved innocent, he starts a new life in Mumbai by studying law and then defends the cases of those who are wrongfully arrested as suspected terrorists. Shahid fights for the ordinary citizens who were picked up by the police from the streets 'and locked up simply because as he puts it—their names happened to be Zahir or Faheem and not Matthew or Donald or Suresh. He begins to defend the accused in a series of terror attacks in Mumbai, courting the derisive nickname "jihaadiyon ka Gandhi"⁸⁴. The film also has the progressive portrayal of Shahid's jeans-clad wife, Maryam (Prabhleen Sandhu), who does not want to

wear a burqa. In this regard, a film commentator has correctly argued as follows:

Hansal Mehta's *Shahid* is a testament of our times, times when polarisation is an everyday reality, where your religious identity could be used as key evidence against you and where right wing elements are lurking round the corner to strike at the social fabric. Through *Shahid*, Mehta shows that there is hope. It is this optimism, the humanistic approach that makes it a guiding light for a section of the society that is suffering from persecution complex. It is not just about the torture, but also about the light at the end of the tunnel. That it is not rocket science to correct the course. *Haan waqt lagta hai*, as Shahid says, but this system still works.... And Shahid, irrespective of the percentage of accuracy, is the right protagonist because he had seen injustice on both sides of the divide. If he had suffered the reality of the 1993 Mumbai riots, he had also lived the barbarity perpetuated in the terror camps in the name of religion. As he says by seeing injustice he learnt the value of justice. Mehta rediscovers his voice as his visuals converse as much as the dialogues. The minuscule budget doesn't come in the way of storytelling, which steers clear of the ostrich approach that Bollywood films usually take on such subjects. The situation is not simple because mostly poor people are implicated under stringent laws and they have no money to pay for legal advice ... overall it is a gripping tale that needs to be experienced to understand that innocent people have no religion.⁸⁵

(p.145) On the other hand, the director of the movie in an interview said that 'the film was born out of my own anger ... about the times that we live in, where the common man gets angry about many things and does nothing about it. The film is my reaction as a filmmaker. I have used it as a medium to provoke some thought process and debate in the mind of the audience'.⁸⁶ The director did not cast any big stars in the film precisely because 'the person portraying the character had to be free from a public image. It had to be someone who had no baggage but someone who could get into the skin of Shahid'.⁸⁷ Thus, it is a timely film and Shahid's real-life lawyer brother, Khalid Azmi told the press, 'Bhai's story had to be told, and it has been told.... Over three years since Shahid's death, his assailants, believed to be Bharat Nepali gang members, are behind bars. But the trial is yet to start.... The case has barely made any progress. Those Shahid worked for—the NGOs and rights activists and lawyers—have all but forgotten him.'⁸⁸ *Firaaq* (2008) directed by Nandita Das is a worthwhile film to watch for its portrayal of the pressing issue of communal violence. It shows the plight of several riot survivors in the aftermath of the communal carnage in Gujarat in 2002. This film narrates the stories of several Muslims, whose lives were affected by the pogrom. This is a film that certainly captures the relevant issue for the Muslim minorities in India.

Assessing Recent Box Office Blockbusters

Before closing this chapter, let me briefly analyse the representational aspects of Indian Muslims in the top 10 Bollywood films of all time on the basis of gross box office collection.⁸⁹ The high box office collections of the top grossing films also mean that due to their large business and popularity, a significant number of people have actually seen them. Thus, if there is any stereotype or problematic representation **(p.146)** of Muslims in these films then, barring a few exceptions of the 1990s super-hits, these recent films might have a more significant impact by reaching a relatively larger audience when compared to the other films that have been so far discussed in this chapter. If one considers the top 12 Bollywood movies that have crossed the INR 300 crore mark in box office collections, then except *Sultan* (rank 5, released in 2016 with INR 584 crore business) and 3 *Idiots* (rank 8, released in 2009 with INR 392 crore business), the remaining 10 films did not have a single Muslim protagonist based in India. The films with the third- and fourth-highest box office collections, *PK* (released in 2014 with INR 735.42 crore business) and *Bajrangi Bhaijaan* (released in 2015 with INR 604.23 crore business), do not show any prominent Muslim character as an Indian citizen, although the earlier part of the latter film was set in the cosmopolitan and mixed religious locality of Delhi's Chandni Chowk. Instead both the films show that Muslims are citizens of Pakistan and Hindus are citizens of India. Sushant Singh Rajput as Sarfaraz Yousaf in *PK* and all prominent Muslim characters in *Bajrangi Bhaijaan* are Pakistanis. This is the underlying communal political character of the top two blockbusters of Bollywood. While both films convey a message of Indo-Pakistan friendship, both countries are problematically projected as communally homogenous as if other than Muslims and Hindus no other religious communities exist in them. Rank 6 in the list of top box office collections belongs to *Dhoom 3* (released in 2013, with a total business of INR 529.97 crores), which shows how the Muslim protagonists based in the USA are actually bank robbers. *Dangal* (rank 1, released in 2016, with a total business of INR 1,988 crore), *Baahubali 2* (rank 2, released in 2017 in several languages, with a business of INR 1,700 crore), and *Chennai Express* (rank 7, released in 2013, with a total business of INR 395 crore) has no Muslim protagonist and hence falls within the category of those films which shows the trend of the 'Missing Muslim' discussed in this chapter. Similarly, in rank 9 in the list is *Prem Ratan Dhan Payo* (released in 2015, with a total business of INR 376 crores) from the house of the Barjatyas, which has no Muslim protagonist. The interesting issue to note in this film is that the Barjatyas did not even cast a token representation of a small Muslim character, which one finds in their 1990s super hits, namely *Hum Aapke Hai Kaun* and *Hum Sath Sath Hain*, as discussed earlier in this chapter. The Shah Rukh Khan and Kajol starrer **(p.147)** *Dilwale* (rank 10, released in 2015, with a total business of INR 372.51 crores) has a token Muslim character in Anwar. Similarly, *Kick* (rank 11, released in 2014, with a total business of INR 360.12 crores) has the sole and token Muslim character in Khalid Asgar. *Bajirao Mastani* (rank 12, released in 2015, with a total business

of INR 357.43 crores) is a period film that shows the Nizam of Hyderabad as the only token Muslim character given the fact that there is debate over Mastani Bai's antecedence and identity about whether she is at all a Muslim woman.

If one considers the other blockbusters that have crossed box-office collections of over INR 300 crores, then three films—*Happy New Year* (released in 2014, with total business of INR 336.64 crores), *Yeh Jawani Hai Deewani* (released in 2013, with a business of INR 302 crores), and *Krissh 3* (released in 2013, with a total business of INR 300 crores) did not have even a single Muslim protagonist. On the other hand, *Ek Tha Tiger* (released in 2012, with a total business of INR 310 crores) although calling for Indo-Pakistan friendship in an imagined situation where there would be no security agencies such as the ISI and RAW, nonetheless showed that Muslims are spies of the Pakistani state. Similarly, *Holiday* and *Filmistaan* (2014) and *Baby* (2015) show Muslims as terrorists. Another hit film of 2014, *Dedh Ishqiya*, a sequel to *Ishqiya* (2010) shows the Muslim protagonists as frauds and crooks.⁹⁰ The only exception among the hit films of 2014 that handled the Muslim identity sensitively and sensibly is *Daawat-e-Ishq*, which has Muslim protagonists along with a prominent secular theme. Shah Rukh Khan's *Raees*, a blockbuster in 2017, is based on Gujarat bootlegger Abdul Latif, an associate of the underworld don Dawood Ibrahim. In effect, the film celebrates the Muslim gangster in a similar manner as *Once Upon a Time in Mumbai*. *Jolly LLB2* (2017) talks about justice for a fake encounter case where a Muslim youth is a victim. **(p.148)** This is a welcome movie but much like the storyline of *Shaurya*, it is not anchored around a Muslim protagonist, which reminds us of the argument of the 'Missing Muslim' in Bollywood cinema.

In analysing Bollywood cinema, one must not forget that although popular cinema is addressed to the 'masses', it actually 'served the ideological reproduction of a social condition marked by what Marx termed "formal subsumption". It is not, as is sometimes said, a cinema by and for the masses, but by the élite for the masses'.⁹¹ No wonder that when the Muslim elites are a minuscule minority in contemporary India, the image constructions of Muslims in Hindi cinema have been profoundly stereotypical and often mythical; it is the non-Muslim elite's portrayal of Muslims, how they want to see and show Muslims, and how they perceive Muslims. While depicting the actual characterization of Indian Muslims, Bollywood has to come out of its engagement both with feudal nostalgia and the image of the 'Muslim other' as a terrorist, foreign spy, mafia don, fraudster, and villain while engaging the text, narrative, and the category of the Muslim identity. The bias in projecting the image of Muslims as terrorists, gangsters, and anti-nationals (which might be an utterly minuscule and insignificant minority among the Muslim community in India) should be resisted both inside and outside the film industry. The fact that such stereotypes are continuously getting reproduced and percolated in Bollywood cinema for generations is a testimony to the fact that such prejudices,

stigma, and myths against Muslims exist within the broader audience that watches cinema. This is indeed a worrying sign. In this regard, those who are directly involved in making Hindi films has to take the initiative to portray the real lives of ordinary and reasonable Muslim citizens of India than the much imagined and stereotyped imaging of Muslims on screen.

Therefore, the imaging of Muslim characters in negative terms should be replaced with a definite tendency for depicting more Muslim protagonists in Bollywood films. The image constructions in the form of 'imagology'⁹² and presupposed notions are largely formed by the general public on the basis of distorted facts, wrong information, ignorance, **(p.149)** and mythical constructions disseminated in the mass psyche manufactured by Bollywood cinema. Without having a dialogue, without knowing anyone in person, people carve out an image of a particular community in their minds in black and white terms. In this respect, Bollywood has played an immensely important role in producing the myths, prejudices, and stereotypes, apart from mystifying the everyday livelihood conditions, of Indian Muslims. Bollywood films thus engaged in continuous reproduction of stereotyped mythical Muslim identity reinforce wrong perceptions about Indian Muslims. Such a process of mythical and stereotyped imaging of Muslims not only informs the dominant public discourses, but also continues in the midst of a lack of progressive political articulation within the Muslim community to counter such hegemonic misperceptions about Muslim minorities. Bollywood cinema has, till date, shown very little about the Muslim secular character, let alone the category of the progressive Muslim, as seen in Farooque Shaikh's character in *Garam Hawa*. In our search for a more optimistic portrayal of the 'Muslim social', devoid of mythical characterization, and to challenge the dominant stereotype of the 'Muslim other' in Hindi cinema, we need more content driven and meaningful films that will show the actual living conditions of Indian Muslims and the real problems that India's largest religious minority face in their everyday lives.

Notes:

(*) M. Madhava Prasad, 'The State in/of Cinema', in *Wages of Freedom: Fifty Years of the Indian Nation-State*, edited by Partha Chatterjee (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 123.

(†) Extract from a speech delivered as a keynote address in a seminar held in connection with the International Film Festival of India, Delhi, in 1979. Documented in Utpal Dutt, *Towards a Heroic Cinema* (Kolkata: M.C. Sarkar & Sons Private Limited, 1994), pp. 25-6.

(¹) Like the 'Muslim Other', women, Dalits, and racially different people have also been treated as the 'alien Other' in several Hindi films. See Anustup Basu,

Bollywood in the Age of New Media: The Geo-Televisual Aesthetic (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), p. 57.

(²) Tejaswani Ganti, *Bollywood: A Guidebook to Popular Hindi Cinema* (New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 23.

(³) Shahid Amin, 'Representing the Musalman: Then and Now, Now and Then', in *Subaltern Studies XII: Muslims, Dalits, and the Fabrications of History*, edited by Shail Mayaram, M.S.S. Pandian, and Ajay Skaria (Delhi: Permanent Black and Ravi Dayal Publisher, 2005), pp. 5-6.

(⁴) Amin, 'Representing the Musalman', pp. 6-7.

(⁵) Malise Ruthven, 'Islam in the Media', in *Interpreting Islam*, edited by Hastings Donnan (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2002).

(⁶) S. Sayyid, 'A Measure of Islamophobia', *Islamophobia Studies Journal*, vol. 2, no. 1 (Spring 2014), pp. 10-25.

(⁷) Dipankar Gupta, *Learning to Forget: The Anti-Memoirs of Modernity* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 184.

(⁸) Paula Chakravartty and Srirupa Roy, 'Media Pluralism Redux: Towards New Frameworks of Comparative Media Studies "Beyond the West"', *Political Communication*, vol. 30, no. 3 (2013), pp. 349-70.

(⁹) Adil Mehdi, 'Radicalism among Indian Muslims in the Aftermath of September 11 Attacks and the War in Afghanistan', in *The Muslims of the Indian Sub-continent after the 11th September Attacks*, edited by Frederic Grare (New Delhi: Centre De Sciences Humaines and India Research Press, 2002).

(¹⁰) Mehdi, 'Radicalism among Indian Muslims', p. 30.

(¹¹) Mehdi, 'Radicalism among Indian Muslims', p. 31.

(¹²) Mehdi, 'Radicalism among Indian Muslims', p. 31.

(¹³) Athar Farooqi, ed., *Muslims and Media Images: News versus Views* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2009).

(¹⁴) Rafiq Zakaria, *Indian Muslims: Where Have They Gone Wrong?* (Mumbai: Popular Prakashan and Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 2004), p. 356.

(¹⁵) Zakaria, *Indian Muslims*.

(¹⁶) Wasbir Hussain, 'Media and Minorities: A Love-Hate Bond', in *Minorities of India: Problems and Prospects*, edited by M.A. Jawaid, K.N. Jehangir, and Shankar Bose (New Delhi: ICCSR and Manak, 2007), pp. 261-3.

(¹⁷) Prasad, 'The State in/of Cinema', p. 138.

(¹⁸) Raminder Kaur and Ajay J. Sinha, eds, *Bollyworld: Popular Indian Cinema through a Transnational Lens* (London: Sage, 2005); Sangita Gopal and Sujata Moorti, eds, *Global Bollywood: Travels of Hindi Film Music* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008).

(¹⁹) A host of stereotypes and various themes covering the period of Hindi cinema from the 1930s to the first decade of twenty-first century ranging from the 'Muslim historical sagas', 'Indo-Persian/Arabic folklore', 'magic, fantasies and horror tales from the Perso-Arab world', 'nawabi (aristocratic) and courtesan fiction', 'Muslim devotional/social dramas', 'identity crisis after 1947/Hindu-Muslim communalism', and 'portrayal of Indian Muslims in adverse roles (underworld, militants)' have been dealt with by Yousuf Saeed in 'From Inclusive to Exclusive: Changing Ingredients of Muslim Identity in Bombay Cinema', in *Minority Studies*, edited by Rowena Robinson (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 270–86.

(²⁰) Nadira Khatun, 'Imagining Muslims as the "Other" in Muslim Political Films', *Journal of Arab and Muslim Media Research*, vol. 9, no. 1 (April 2016), pp. 41–60.

(²¹) Ashis Nandy, 'Indian Popular Cinema as a Slum's Eye View of Politics', in *The Secret Politics of Our Desires: Innocence, Culpability and Indian Popular Cinema*, edited by Ashis Nandy (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 9.

(²²) Nandy, 'Indian Popular Cinema as a Slum's Eye View of Politics', p. 12.

(²³) Mahesh Bhatt, 'Cinema & Secularism', *Communalism Combat*, vol. 11, no. 105 (February 2005), available at <https://www.sabrang.com/cc/archive/2005/feb05/cover.html>, accessed on 30 March 2017.

(²⁴) Ravi S. Vasudevan, 'Film Genres, the Muslim Social, and Discourses of Identity c. 1935–1945', *BioScope: South Asian Screen Studies*, vol. 6, no. 1 (January 2015), pp. 27–43.

(²⁵) Alpana Sharma, 'From *nawab* to *jihadi*: The Transformation of Muslim Identity in Popular Indian Cinema', in *Islam and Postcolonial Discourse: Purity and Hybridity*, edited by Esra Mirze Santesso and James E. McClung (New York: Routledge, 2017).

(²⁶) Syed Ali Mujtaba, 'Bollywood and the Indian Muslims', available at <http://www.indianmuslims.info> posted on 21 November 2006, accessed on 15 September 2007.

(²⁷) S. Hussain Zaidi, *Dongri to Dubai: Six Decades of the Mumbai Mafia* (New Delhi: Roli Books, 2012), p. 115.

(²⁸) Iqbal Masud, 'Muslim Ethos in Indian Cinema', available at http://www.screenindia.com/fullstory.php?content_id=9980, posted on 4 March 2004.

(²⁹) Chidananda Das Gupta, 'New Directions in Indian Cinema', *Film Quarterly*, vol. 34, no. 1 (1980), p. 35.

(³⁰) A scholarly and detailed analysis of the film can be seen in William Elison, Christian Lee Novetzke, and Andy Rotman, *Amar Akbar Anthony: Bollywood, Brotherhood and the Nation* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2016).

(³¹) Sonali Ghosh Sen, 'The Embers Refuse to Die', available at <http://www.hardnewsmedia.com/oct2004/bio.php>, accessed on 15 September 2007.

(³²) Prasad, 'The State in/of Cinema', p. 143.

(³³) Akbar S. Ahmed, 'Bombay Films: The Cinema as Metaphor for Indian Society and Politics', *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 26, no. 2 (1992), p. 312.

(³⁴) Ahmed, 'Bombay Films', p. 313.

(³⁵) For an interesting discussion on this issue, see Brigitte Schulze, 'The Cinematic "Discovery of India": Mehboob's Re-Invention of the Nation in Mother India', *Social Scientist*, vol. 30, nos 9-10 (September-October 2002), pp. 72-87.

(³⁶) M.K. Raghavendra, *Seduced by the Familiar: Narration and Meaning in Indian Popular Cinema* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 146.

(³⁷) Ravi S. Vasudevan, *Making Meaning of Indian Cinema* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 2.

(³⁸) For an elaborate analysis of these issues, see Rachel Dwyer and Divia Patel, *The Visual Culture of Hindi Film* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2002).

(³⁹) This film is also one of the greatest box-office hits of all time. See Rachel Dwyer, *Bollywood Films* (New Delhi: Roli Books, 2005), p. 114.

(⁴⁰) Basu, *Bollywood in the Age of New Media*, p. 82.

(⁴¹) Meheli Sen, 'It's All about Loving Your Parents: Liberalisation, Hindutva and Bollywood's New Fathers', in *Bollywood and Globalisation: Indian Popular Cinema, Nation, and Diaspora*, edited by Rini Bhattacharya Mehta and Rajeshwari V. Pandharipande (London: Anthem Press, 2011), pp. 145-68.

(⁴²) See the news report 'If I Have Committed Any Mistake, I Apologise: Modi', *The Hindu* (Ahmedabad edition), 21 December 2012.

(⁴³) Ashis Nandy, 'The Popular Hindi Film: Ideology and First Principles', *Indian International Centre Quarterly*, vol. 8, no. 1 (1981), pp. 89–96.

(⁴⁴) Mukul Kesavan, 'Urdu, Awadh and the Tawaif: The Islamicate Roots of Hindi Cinema', in *Forging Identities: Gender, Communities and the State*, edited by Zoya Hasan (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1994), pp. 244–57.

(⁴⁵) Rachel Dwyer, 'Representing the Muslim: The "Courtesan Film" in Indian Popular Cinema', in *Jews, Muslims and Mass Media: Mediating the 'Other'*, edited by Tudor Parfitt and Yulia Egorova (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004), pp. 78–92; Ira Bhashkar and Richard Allen, *Islamicate Cultures of Bombay Cinema* (Delhi: Tulika Books, 2009).

(⁴⁶) Fareeduddin Kazmi, 'How Angry Is the Angry Young Man? "Rebellion" in Conventional Hindi Films', in *The Secret Politics of Our Desires: Innocence, Culpability and Indian Popular Cinema*, edited by Ashis Nandy (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 134–7.

(⁴⁷) Raghavendra, *Seduced by the Familiar*, pp. 230–1.

(⁴⁸) Meraj Ahmed Mubarak, 'Exploring the "Other": Inter-faith Marriages in *Jodhaa Akbar* and Beyond', *Contemporary South Asia*, vol. 22, no. 3 (2014), pp. 255–67.

(⁴⁹) Fareed Kazmi, *The Politics of India's Conventional Cinema: Imaging a Universe, Subverting a Multi-verse* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1999), p. 12.

(⁵⁰) For a more detailed analysis on this issue, see M. Madhava Prasad, *Ideology of the Hindi Film: A Historical Construction* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998).

(⁵¹) Sumita Chakravarty, 'Fragmenting the Nation: Images of Terrorism in Indian Popular Cinema', in *Terrorism, Media, Liberation*, edited by John David Slocum (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2005), pp. 232–47. On this issue of production of a 'Muslim Other' and the demonic portrayal of Muslims in Bollywood cinema, also see Kalyani Chadha and Anandam P. Kavoori, 'Exoticized, Marginalized and Demonized: The Muslims as "Other" in Bollywood Cinema', in *Global Bollywood*, edited by Anandam P. Kavoori and Aswin Punathambekar (New York: New York University Press, 2008), pp. 131–45.

(⁵²) Gagandeep Ghuman, 'The Muslim as the "Other" in Bollywood', available at <https://www.countercurrents.org/arts-ghuman210206.htm>, accessed on 20 June 2013.

(⁵³) Ananya Jahanara Kabir, 'The Kashmiri as Muslim in Bollywood's "New Kashmir Films"', *Contemporary South Asia*, vol. 18, no. 4 (December 2010), p. 384.

⁽⁵⁴⁾ The film was jointly written by Basharat Peer and Vishal Bhardwaj and was based on Shakespeare's play *Hamlet*.

⁽⁵⁵⁾ Syed Ali Mujtaba, 'Bollywood's Caricatures', available at http://www.himalmag.com/2004/february/commentary_3.htm, accessed on 14 September 2013.

⁽⁵⁶⁾ Rakesh Gupta, *Terrorism, Communalism and Other Challenges to Indian Security* (Delhi: Kalpaz Publications, 2004), p. 242.

⁽⁵⁷⁾ Tapan K. Ghosh, *Bollywood Baddies: Villains, Vamps, and Henchmen in Hindi Cinema* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2013), p. 205.

⁽⁵⁸⁾ Sudhanva Deshpande, 'Secular Surge', *Frontline*, vol. 21 no. 23 (6–19 November 2004), available at http://www.frontline.in/static/html/fl_2123/stories/20041119001508800.htm, last accessed on 30 March 2017.

⁽⁵⁹⁾ S. Hussain Zaidi, *Black Friday: The True Story of the Bombay Blasts* (New Delhi: Penguin, 2002).

⁽⁶⁰⁾ Roshni Sengupta, *The Islamist Terrorist in Popular Hindi Cinema: Crisis of Perspective in New York and Kurbaan?* NMML Occasional Paper, Perspectives in Indian Development, New Series 17 (New Delhi: Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, 2013).

⁽⁶¹⁾ Ghosh, *Bollywood Baddies*, p. 212.

⁽⁶²⁾ The genre of small-town cinema in Hindi has been insightfully dealt with in Akshaya Kumar's 'Provincialising Bollywood? Cultural Economy of North-Indian Small-town Nostalgia in the Indian Multiplex', *South Asian Popular Culture*, vol. 11, no.1 (2013), pp. 61–74.

⁽⁶³⁾ Harshikaa Udasi, 'Still in the Race: Interview of Actor Anil Kapoor', *The Hindu*, 12 April 2013, available at <http://www.thehindu.com/features/cinema/still-in-the-race/article4610368.ece>, accessed on 23 October 2017.

⁽⁶⁴⁾ Deshpande, 'Secular Surge'.

⁽⁶⁵⁾ Deshpande, 'Secular Surge'.

⁽⁶⁶⁾ Mitu Sengupta, 'A Million Dollar Exit from the Anarchic Slum-world: Slumdog Millionaire's Hollow Idioms of Social Justice', *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 31, no. 4 (2010), pp. 599–616.

⁽⁶⁷⁾ Salman Rushdie, 'A Fine Pickle', *The Guardian* (28 February 2009).

(⁶⁸) Manisha Basu, 'Rang De Basanti: The Solvent Brown and Other Imperial Colors', in *Bollywood and Globalization: Indian Popular Cinema, Nation, and Diaspora*, edited by Rini Bhattacharya Mehta and Rajeshwari V. Pandharipande (London: Anthem Press, 2011), pp. 93–5.

(⁶⁹) Basu, 'Rang De Basanti', pp. 98–110.

(⁷⁰) Raghavendra, *Seduced by the Familiar*, pp. 256–60.

(⁷¹) Mujtaba, 'Bollywood and the Indian Muslims'.

(⁷²) Nazia Hussein and Saba Hussain, 'Interrogating Practices of Gender, Religion and Nationalism in the Representation of Muslim Women in Bollywood: Contexts of Change, Sites of Continuity', *Exchanges: The Warwick Research Journal*, vol. 2, no. 2 (2015), pp. 284–304.

(⁷³) In this film, Shah Rukh Khan is a Muslim man with Asperger's syndrome and experiences racial profiling in the United States in the aftermath of September 11. See Ajay Gehlawat, *Twenty-First Century Bollywood* (New York: Routledge, 2015), p. 29.

(⁷⁴) Kazmi, 'How Angry Is the Angry Young Man?', pp. 140–1.

(⁷⁵) Sanjeev Kumar HM, 'Constructing the Nation's Enemy: *Hindutva*, Popular Culture and the Muslim "other" in Bollywood Cinema', *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 34, no. 3 (2013), pp. 458–69.

(⁷⁶) Kumar, 'Constructing the Nation's Enemy'.

(⁷⁷) Iqbal Masud, 'Muslim Ethos in Indian Cinema', available at http://www.screenindia.com/fullstory.php?content_id=9980, posted on 4 March 2004, accessed on 15 September 2007.

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(⁸¹) Saeed, 'From Inclusive to Exclusive', p. 284.

(⁸²) Monica Sakhrani, 'Remembering Shahid Azmi', *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 45, no. 11 (13–19 March 2010), pp. 25–6.

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(⁸⁶) Shilpa Sebastian R., 'The Film Is My Reaction', *The Hindu*, 16 October 2013.

(⁸⁷) Shilpa Sebastian R., 'A Reaction Film', *The Hindu*, 17 October 2013.

(⁸⁸) Sukanya Shantha, 'My Family Lacks Courage to Watch Shahid: Can't See Him Die Again', *The Indian Express* [Mumbai], 21 October 2013.

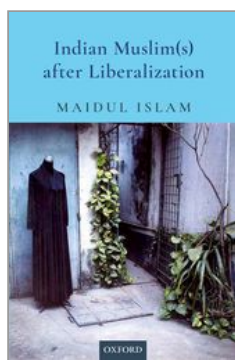
(⁸⁹) All data collected from <http://www.bollymoviereviewz.com/2013/05/top-10-bollywood-movies-of-alltime-by.html>, accessed on 27 October 2017.

(⁹⁰) The film is also read differently as an expression of two kinds of homosociality: male and female along with a ruthless updating and satirized form of the traditional Muslim social's universe of Urdu poetry, mellifluous rhetoric, courteous civility, and the marriage plot. See Aneeta Rajendran, 'Popular Forms, Altering Normativities: Queer Buddies in Contemporary Mainstream Hindi Cinema', in *Bollywood and Its Other(s): Towards New Configurations*, edited by Vikrant Kishore, Amit Sarwal and Parichay Patra (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), pp. 154–9.

(⁹¹) Prasad, 'The State in/of Cinema', p. 141.

(⁹²) Manfred Beller and Joeph Leerssen, eds, *Imagology: The Cultural Construction and Literary Representation of National Characters: A Critical Survey* (Amsterdam: Radopi, 2007).

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Indian Muslim(s) After Liberalization

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Indian Muslims and the Politics of Affirmative Action

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Abstract and Keywords

Chapter 3 assesses the underlying political logic of community-based affirmative action and reservation that is promoted as the new ameliorative policy, addressing the deprivation of Indian Muslims under conditions of economic reforms. It does so by engaging with the findings and policy prescriptions of the Sachar Committee Report, the Ranganath Misra Commission Report, and the post-Sachar Evaluation Committee Report. Besides, the chapter points out the missing links of the Sachar Committee Report and presents a host of other suggestions that the committee did not recommend for the socio-economic development of Indian Muslims. While evaluating the merits of the Sachar and Misra Commission reports along with defending the ethical grounds for the affirmative action for Muslims in India, this chapter also tries to unearth the limitations of the approach of the government towards Muslim minorities in the context of neoliberal dispensation.

Keywords: affirmative action, ameliorative policy, Sachar Committee Report, Ranganath Misra Commission Report, post-Sachar Evaluation Committee Report, socio-economic development

A demand which initially is perhaps only a *request* ... if the demand is satisfied, that is the end of the matter; but if it is not, people can start to perceive ... equally unsatisfied demands.... If the situation remains unchanged for some time, there is an accumulation of unfulfilled demands and an increasing inability of the institutional system to absorb them in a *differential* way (each in isolation from others), and an *equivalential* relation is established between them. The result could easily be, if it is not

circumvented by external factors, a widening chasm separating the institutional system from the people. So we have here the formation of an internal frontier, a dichotomization of the local political spectrum through the emergence of an equivalential chain of unsatisfied demands. The *requests* are turning into *claims*. We will call a demand which, satisfied or not, remains isolated a *democratic demand*. A plurality of demands which, through their equivalential articulation, constitute a broader social subjectivity we will call *popular demands*—they start, at a very incipient level, to constitute the ‘people’ as a potential historical actor.... This is the transition from what we have called *democratic* demands to *popular* demands. The first can be accommodated within an expanding hegemonic formation; the second presents a challenge to the hegemonic formation as such.

—Ernesto Laclau*

(p.151) I argue that sometimes recognizing particular rights for groups is the only way to promote their full participation. Some fear that such differential treatment again stigmatizes these groups. I show how this is true only if we continue to understand difference as opposition—identifying equality with sameness and difference with deviance or devaluation. Recognition of group difference also requires a principle of political decision making that encourages autonomous organization of groups within a public. This entails establishing procedures for ensuring that each group’s voice is heard in the public, through institutions of group representation.

—Iris Marion Young†

(p.152) In the previous chapter, I have discussed the stereotypes and image vilifications of Indian Muslims in popular Hindi cinema. This chapter first looks at how the Indian state has been responding to the socio-economic problems of the Indian Muslims by discussing the Sachar Committee Report and the post-Sachar evaluation committee report. Second, this chapter theorizes about the politics of affirmative action for Muslims in India.

The Indian state has included Dalits, Adivasis, and OBCs within the purview of affirmative action and reservation policies with a protective legal framework. However, it has shown very little interest to do the same in case of religious minorities.¹ If we follow the statistical data relating to education, poverty, income, and employment, then Indian Muslims are comparably more deprived than other religious communities along with Dalits and Adivasis as observed by the Sachar Committee Report. The report notes that ‘while there is considerable variation in the conditions of Muslims across states, the community exhibits deficits and deprivation in practically all dimensions of development’.² The

miserable situation of Muslim minorities revealed by the Sachar Committee Report decisively shatters the *myth* of so-called Muslim appeasement. Another tale of assuming that all Muslim students attend madrasas was also proved wrong as the Sachar Committee estimates show that on an all-India basis only 3 per cent Muslim children attend madrasas.³

The Sachar Committee Report conclusively proved that the bulk of Indian Muslims suffers from grave deprivation in social, economic, and educational fields because of lack of access to education, health care, other public services, and employment. The level of deprivation is such that in some sectors, Muslims are lagging behind Dalits. There is no denying the fact that the Sachar Committee Report has been a **(p.153)** comprehensive study that took into account significant aspects of the everyday livelihood issues of Muslim minorities in India. It has also considered in great detail the possibility of finding an alternative to better the socio-economic situation of Muslims in India by making a host of policy suggestions and recommendations. The approach of the Sachar Committee in dealing with data collection and data analysis reveals some crucial questions regarding deprivation, exclusion, and occupational structure of Indian Muslims. It was a mammoth task, which was long awaited and a post-Independence Indian government, true to its secular credentials, did precisely map the Muslim situation to understand how its largest religious minorities are doing.

While a detailed analysis of the Sachar Committee Report and its findings may not be feasible here, this chapter will deliberate upon the merits of the report besides including some critical reflections on the report. This chapter also argues against the rhetoric of 'Muslim appeasement' and other myths. For example, the committee recognized 'moderate fertility' rate among Muslims.⁴ Such a fact exposes the *myth* of the so-called Muslim population explosion. The data of Pew Research Center also nullifies the myth of the Muslim population explosion in India. It predicts that by 2050, India will be primarily a Hindu majority country with 76.7 per cent of the total Indian population being Hindus, while Muslims will be only 18.4 per cent of the total population.⁵ Although by 2050, India would be the country with the largest number of Muslims in the world, surpassing Indonesia, Hindus would constitute more than three-fourths of India.⁶ Thus, there is no factual evidence for misleading campaigns from specific sectors of the political spectrum that Muslims would take over Hindus in terms of numbers in India.

In the context of overall socio-economic backwardness of the Indian Muslims that challenges the deceptive campaign of 'Muslim appeasement', the Sachar Committee made some recommendations and policy suggestions along with a call for affirmative action. This chapter will not discuss at length what the Sachar Committee Report has already **(p.154)** said. On the contrary, it will make some observations that the Sachar Committee did not take into account,

namely, the landholding pattern among Indian Muslims, the under-representation of Muslims in panchayats and the police force, and the specific problems of Muslim women.

The Great Omissions: Land, Panchayats, Police, and Women

Although the Sachar Committee produced a comprehensive report, nonetheless, there were some missing links. First, the Sachar Committee did not deal with the Land question in great detail despite the availability of such data from religious groups at least in the 55th Round (1999–2000) of NSSO and the India Human Development Report, 1999.⁷ It is important to talk about the landholding data and the nature of Indian agriculture in an era of agrarian distress under the neoliberal regime. India has been facing an agrarian crisis, and farm incomes have been dwindling since the 1990s. In such a context, not highlighting the landholding patterns among Indian Muslims was a severe lapse on behalf of the Sachar Committee. Chapter 5 of its report mentioned that ‘ownership of physical assets (especially land) and human capital (especially education) not only affects employment opportunities but also determines occupational patterns. Relatively poor access to these assets may force workers to remain at the lower end of the labour market hierarchy’.⁸ Having said so, the committee could have analysed the landholding patterns in different Indian states as it did vis-à-vis employment, education, and access to credit.

The political representation of Muslims at the panchayat level should have been taken into account while preparing the report as the overall socio-economic development of a particular community cannot be understood without knowing the nature of political empowerment at the grassroots level of democracy. Also, from a gender perspective, the report could have had a separate chapter on and a detailed analysis of the problems of Muslim women. It could have compared the situation **(p.155)** of Muslim women with that of women from other socio-religious communities, and may also have made a comparison between Muslim men and Muslim women.⁹ The Sachar Committee Report only makes few passing references about Muslim women in just four pages:

For large number of Muslim women in India today, the ‘safe’ space is within the boundaries of home and community.¹⁰

While the education system appears to have given up on Muslim girls, the girls themselves have not given up on education.... The resistance to recognize minority educational institutions by state governments has been a matter of serious concern with the Community.¹¹

Perceptions of public security—partly associated with increasing incidents of communal violence—prevent parents from sending daughters to schools.¹²

Muslim women are unable to bargain for better work conditions because much of the work they do is subcontracted.¹³

Such passing references do not make up for the report's incompleteness of not placing the necessary emphasis on the Muslim women in more substantive ways.

Given the overall backwardness of Muslim women when compared with women of other socio-religious groups, as was evident from data provided in the report, the report should have included a separate chapter on the particular case of gender discrimination and exclusion among Indian Muslims.¹⁴ Moreover, the peculiar problems of rural Muslim **(p.156)** women,¹⁵ such as the issues of purdah (seclusion) and divorce¹⁶ in an increasingly modernized world, the educational backwardness, the problem of unemployment, and the question of identity formation independent of their family,¹⁷ could have been dealt with by the Sachar Committee Report in a much more elaborate manner, given the fact that there is available literature as well as data on these matters. This exclusion of the women of the community in the discourse of state policy towards Muslim minorities is nothing new. The Shah Bano case, and the subsequent statist response of passing the Muslim Women's (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Bill in 1986, was actually the Indian government's recognition of the patriarchal control of the so-called authentic community leaders over the Muslim community where religious symbols, religious codes, and conservative religious leaders have played an important role in constructing the 'Muslim identity'.¹⁸

Although the Sachar Committee Report takes into account the 637,146 employees of the home departments of 12 states,¹⁹ it does **(p.157)** not differentiate between administrative and police officials in those departments so that one can know the exact strength of the country's police force. The committee noticed a gross under-representation of Muslims in national security agencies²⁰ and home departments, but merely pointed out that the overall share of Muslim police constables is 6 per cent;²¹ however, it did not categorically mention the total number of the police force and the share of Muslims in it. A detailed survey of the police force of all states and those under the jurisdiction of the central home department should have been carried out, as Muslim representation in the police force is very crucial in a country torn by communal conflicts. According to the Annual Report of the National Commission of Minorities, the most substantial minority in India 'remains grossly under-represented in all services including the police'.²² The negligible presence of Muslims in the police force (see Tables 3.1 and 3.2) only makes the community very vulnerable during communal riots and other forms of sectarian violence in neoliberal India. The composition of the police force in India, with a tiny proportion of Muslims, indeed makes the police often act in a biased manner in moments of communal tensions.²³ The biases on the part of police forces in precarious junctures of communal riots in independent India is well documented at least in the cases of the Moradabad riots in 1980, **(p.158)** Meerut riots in

1987, the Ayodhya incidents of 1992, the Mumbai riots in 1993, and Gujarat genocide of 2002, where the police exhibited active hostility towards Muslim victims.²⁴

Table 3.1 SCs, STs, and Muslims in Police Force in India (2002)

| SCs | STs | Muslims | Others | Total |
|------------------|----------------|----------------|---------------|-----------|
| 158,740 (13.58%) | 93,872 (8.03%) | 97,928 (8.37%) | 818,185 (70%) | 1,168,725 |

Source: Available at <https://www.indiastat.com/table/crime-and-law-data/6/representation-of-scs-sts-obcs-in-police-forces/478108/360452/data.aspx>, accessed on 10 April 2018.

Table 3.2 SCs, STs, and Muslims in Police Force in India (2012)

| SC | ST | Muslim | Others | Total |
|------------------|------------------|-----------------|--------------------|-----------|
| 234,796 (14.01%) | 173,852 (10.38%) | 108,975 (6.50%) | 1,157,132 (69.09%) | 1,674,755 |

Source: Crime in India 2012, Ministry of Home Affairs, GOI, Table 17.12, p. 600.

According to the official data of the Ministry of Home Affairs, in the decade of 2002–12, the representation of Muslims in the police force fell by nearly 2 per cent from 8.37 per cent to 6.50 per cent (see Tables 3.1 and 3.2). Given the unavailability of data related to the caste and religious profiles of the police force in the latest annual reports of Crime in India, I had to rely on the 2012 report where such data was available. Despite the limitations of the Sachar Committee Report in tabulating some important data regarding Muslims, it has made very important policy recommendations in the form of affirmative action concerning the socio-economic development of Muslims in India.

Indian Muslims and Affirmative Action Policies

In the context of the overall socio-economic backwardness of Indian Muslims, the Sachar Committee made some recommendations and **(p.159)** policy suggestions.²⁵ The summary of such recommendations and policy suggestions are as follows:

1. Proper mechanisms must be ensured for achieving equity and equality of opportunity to bring about inclusion. Adequate measures must be taken to ensure diversity so that the perception of discrimination is eliminated.
2. The committee recommended the creation of a National Data Bank (NDB) where all relevant data for various socio-religious categories (SRCs) are maintained.
3. The committee recommended to set up an independent Assessment and Monitoring Authority (AMA) to evaluate the extent of development benefits which accrue to different SRCs through various programmes. Academics, professionals, civil society organizations along with state authorities as the official members can be part of this authority and perform a watchdog function. Such a body can closely monitor the participation of various socio-religious groups at multiple programmes implemented by both state and central governments. Since government and public records are getting digitized, it would be possible for the AMA to monitor 'diversity' in participation on a regular basis and this will facilitate monitoring at all levels of governance from grassroots panchayats to the Parliament. Tracking of such an exercise should be done concurrently, and an elaborate monitoring exercise should be undertaken every five years. The results of this exercise can be properly utilized for the reformulation of policies, if required.
4. The widespread perception of discrimination among the Muslim community needs to be addressed. There are hardly any empirical studies that establish discrimination, but research in this area needs to be encouraged. Hopefully, better availability of data in the future could result in more research studies in this area. While equity in the implementation of government schemes for Muslims and better participation of the community in the development **(p.160)** process

could gradually eliminate the perception of discrimination, there is a need to strengthen the legal provisions to reduce such cases. It is imperative that if Muslims have some opinions of being aggrieved, the state must make all kinds of efforts to find a mechanism by which their complaints could be expeditiously attended. Such an arrangement must work to satisfy the minorities so that any denial of equal opportunities or bias or discrimination in dealing with them, either by public functionary or any private individual, will immediately be attended to and redress is given.

5. The committee recommended that an Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC) should be constituted to look into the grievances of the deprived groups. While providing a redressal mechanism for different types of discrimination, this will give further reassurance to the minorities that any illegal action against them will invite the vigilance of the law.

6. A carefully conceived 'nomination' procedure should be worked out to increase inclusiveness in governance and for enhancing participation of minorities at the grassroots. The committee recommended that on the lines of initiatives taken by the Andhra Pradesh government, relevant state-level laws can be enacted to ensure minority representation in local bodies. Each state implementing this provision may need to recognize both linguistic and religious minorities.

7. The committee also recommended the elimination of the anomalies concerning reserved constituencies under the delimitation schemes. A more rational delimitation procedure that does not reserve constituencies for SCs with high minority population would improve the opportunity for the Muslim minorities to contest and be elected to the Indian Parliament and state assemblies.

8. The idea of providing incentives to a 'diversity index' should be explored. A wide variety of incentives can be linked to this index to ensure equal opportunity to all socio-religious groups in the areas of education, government, private employment, and housing. Facilitating the creation of public spaces such as parks, libraries, and study spaces can enhance interaction among SRCs and can provide the much-needed fillip to educational initiatives. The community or civil society can use such spaces to organize **(p.161)** remedial classes, reading rooms, and other constructive efforts. The state should encourage such initiatives in mixed localities and across neighbourhoods. The relevant functionaries should be sensitive to the necessity of having diversity and the problems associated with social exclusion. A large-scale scheme for the sensitization of various staff of the government departments, especially those who come in contact with the general public on a regular basis is desirable, with a focus on health-sector employees, teachers, police, and other security personnel.

9. Providing free and compulsory education until the age of 14 years is the responsibility of the state. Fulfilment of such an obligation is crucial for improvements in the educational conditions of Muslims. Also, the committee recommended that a process of evaluating the content of the school textbooks needs to be initiated and institutionalized. The following initiatives are desirable for promoting school education among Muslims: (a) Given the fact that a substantial proportion of Muslim households in urban settlements lives in one-room accommodations, it is necessary to create local community study centres for students so that they can spend a few hours to concentrate on their studies. The government, non-government organizations, and the corporate sector can cooperate in this area. (b) High-quality government schools should be set up in all areas of Muslim concentration. (c) Exclusive schools for girls should be set up, particularly for the 9–12 standards. In co-education schools, more women teachers need to be appointed. (d) Access to primary education in one's mother tongue is constitutionally provided. There is an urgent need to undertake appropriate mapping of the Urdu-speaking population and provide primary education in Urdu in areas where the Urdu-speaking community is concentrated. Here, the utilization of funds from the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM) for these purposes should be explored.

10. About technical education and training for non-matriculates, the committee recommended that (a) the pre-entry qualification for admission should be reduced to Class VIII. The scope of ITI courses should be expanded to focus on emerging market needs including those of the retail sector. (b) Skill development **(p.162)** initiatives and polytechnics should concentrate on those sectors which have a high potential for growth, and in which the Muslim population is concentrated. These training initiatives should also focus on areas where the minority population is concentrated. (c) The eligibility for such programmes should also be extended to madrasa-educated children as they are ineligible to get trained under many current formal technical education streams.

11. Regarding higher education, the committee recommended that some initiatives should be taken and some concrete strategies should be adopted: (a) The University Grants Commission (UGC) must be encouraged to evolve a system where part of the allocation of funds is linked to the diversity in the student population in colleges and universities. Even private colleges, including those run by the minorities and which have an affiliation with universities or are recognized by state bodies, can be provided with additional funds if they have a diverse student population and charge reasonable fees. Low fees combined with merit-cum-means scholarships (partly funded by government grants) would enhance participation of the poor among the minorities. (b) To facilitate admissions in the regular universities and autonomous colleges

for the 'most backward' amongst all the SRCs, alternate admission criteria need to be evolved.

12. Providing hostel facilities at reasonable costs for Muslim students in general and Muslim girl students in particular, in cities of all sizes must be a priority. Ideally, the provision of such facilities should be made in partnership with the community; the state can facilitate community initiatives in this area through grants and other support. The taluka headquarters and educational centres would be the best locations for such facilities.

13. Teacher Training Programme should compulsorily include in its curriculum components that introduce the importance of diversity within the country and sensitize teachers towards the needs and aspirations of Muslims and other marginalized communities.

14. Given the commitment to provide primary education in the child's mother tongue, the state must run Urdu-medium schools. Moreover, for secondary education, the distortions made in the Three Language Formula should be corrected to accommodate Urdu in schools of the Hindi region. Besides, three more measures **(p.163)** are desirable: (a) Often Urdu schools have teachers who do not know the language. This problem is partly because in many cases, the posts of Urdu teachers are reserved for the SCs and STs, and such candidates are not available. This anomaly needs to be corrected urgently. (b) High-quality Urdu-medium schools can be opened in those parts of the country wherever there is demand for them. However, it needs to be ensured that good-quality textbooks are available in the Urdu language and the products of these are employable. (c) Urdu should be introduced as an optional subject in all government and government-aided schools in those states that have a substantial Urdu-speaking population.

15. The committee further recommended the following: (a) Work out mechanisms whereby madrasas can be linked with a higher secondary school board so that students wanting to shift to a mainstream education can do so after having passed from a madrasa. (b) Provision of 'equivalence' to madrasa degrees for subsequent admissions into institutions of a higher level of education should be made. Flexibility should be introduced to enable madrasa graduates to move to regular mainstream education if they wish. Such an opportunity should be available to them, especially in courses where admission is dependent on an entrance test. (c) Recognition of the degrees from madrasas for eligibility in competitive examinations such as the civil services, banks, defence services, and other such exams is desirable. (d) In the 1990s, the government introduced a scheme for the modernization of madrasas. It was a step in the right direction, but it was robbed of part of its utility because of some deficiencies relating to, for example, the choice of subjects, quality of teachers, and accommodation of the modern subjects

in a timetable intensely packed with traditional subjects. The government will be well advised to review and revamp the scheme before embarking on its expansion.

16. The recommendations of the committee in financial matters are as follows: (a) All banks should provide information about the localities to which loans have been disbursed. The banks should also keep the information regarding the socio-religious background of the customers and clients and make this available to the Reserve Bank of India. (b) The committee recommends promoting and enhancing access of Muslims to priority sector advances **(p.164)** for improving access to credit and government programmes. Any shortfall in the achievement of a targeted amount in minority-specific programmes should be parked with the National Minorities Development and Finance Corporation (NMDFC), National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), and Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI). Specific schemes should be funded from such unspent money. However, the real need is for those policy initiatives that could improve the participation and share of Muslim minorities in the business of regular commercial banks. Since the size of the credit flows through proper banking channels is much higher than various community-specific programmes, higher participation of minorities will result in more substantial gains for them. (c) The committee also recommended that the coverage under public programmes should be extended to include more schemes and should consist of lending by NABARD and SIDBI. The latter should set aside a fund for the training of Muslim minorities under its Entrepreneurial Development Programme. Such programmes should not only aim to improve the skills of the artisans in traditional occupations but also re-equip them with modern skills required to face the adverse effects of globalization in their area of artisanship. Given the substantial presence of Muslims in these occupational groups, particular attention should be given to them. (d) A policy to enhance the participation of minorities in the micro-credit schemes of NABARD should be laid down. This policy should spell out the intervention required by NABARD through a mix of target and incentive schemes based on the population percentage of Muslims in the village to enhance the participation of Muslims in micro-credit.

17. Further, (a) it is desirable to have experts drawn from the Muslim community on relevant interview panels and boards as this practice is already in vogue in the case of SCs and STs. (b) There should be transparency in information about minorities in all activities. It should be made mandatory to publish information in a prescribed format once in three months and to post the same on the website of the departments and state governments. There should be provision for reporting defaults and delays in the processing of application at the state, district, and block

levels. Applicants should have **(p.165)** the full right to information about the status of their applications. The information regarding the application and the processing stage should be made known to the applicant on request. This information should also be made available through websites, which will benefit not only Muslims but also all communities.

18. Other points noted by the committee were as follows: (a) There is a need to revise the coverage of districts under the Prime Minister's 15-Point Programme based on the Census 2001 data. The Sachar Committee recommended that all 58 districts with more than 25 per cent Muslim population should be brought under the Prime Minister's 15 Point Programme. A special assistance package for the development of those 58 districts should be launched. The same principle might be applied to talukas or blocks with a similar concentration of Muslims. (b) Although there are many Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS) and Central Plan Schemes (CPS) available for the welfare of SCs, STs, and OBCs, such schemes for the welfare of minorities are rare. Even the available schemes are inadequately funded. Overall, targeting backward districts and clusters where special artisanal groups exist will ensure a sharp reduction in disparities in access and attainment. The central government should introduce a few schemes with massive outlays for the welfare of minorities with an equitable provision for Muslims.

19. About improving employment opportunities and conditions, the committee suggested the following initiatives that seem desirable: (a) Provide financial and other support to efforts built around those occupations in which Muslims are concentrated and which have growth potential. Such initiatives can take the form of interventions where existing skills of the workers are combined with knowledge of modern management practices, new technology, and emerging market needs. In specific contexts, the skilled persons benefiting from these interventions may consist of youth who have not had adequate schooling. While initiatives of the kind discussed in the previous point can also be undertaken in clusters, which have significant concentrations of the Muslim population, a few more area-specific initiatives are desirable. Since skill upgradation needs might be high in such clusters, the location of Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs), polytechnics, and other institutions that provide skill training to the non-matriculated needs attention in those **(p.166)** spaces. (b) Given the precarious conditions of the self-employed persons in the informal sector, especially the home-based workers, it is desirable to have a mandated social security system for such workers. Casual workers in the informal sector should also be able to participate in such schemes. Since the state is already thinking of such a project, an early implementation would benefit a large section of the Muslim population along with helping the more significant segment of the informal sector workforce. (c) A more transparent recruitment system

will help to build public confidence in the system. It is not being suggested that inclusion of minorities in selection committees will improve the chances of selection of Muslims. However, it can undoubtedly enhance the confidence of Muslim applicants during the selection process. (d) It is imperative to increase the employment share of Muslims, particularly in contexts where there is a great amount of public dealing. Their public visibility will endow the Muslim community with a sense of confidence and involvement, and help them in accessing these facilities in more significant numbers and higher proportions. To achieve this, efforts should be made to increase the employment share of Muslims in the teaching community, health workers, police personnel, bank employees, and so on. Employers should be encouraged to endorse their organizations as 'equal opportunity institutions' so that applicants from all SRCs may apply. A time-bound effort in this direction is desirable. (e) When Muslims appear for the prescribed tests and interviews their success rate is appreciable as per the data provided by the Sachar Committee. This applies both to public- and private-sector jobs. Some simple measures, such as undertaking a visible recruitment process in areas and districts with a high percentage of Muslims, job advertisements in Urdu and vernacular newspapers and other media, or simple messages such as 'women, minority, and backward class candidates are encouraged to apply', may create an atmosphere of trust and confidence. Similarly, not as a measure to eliminate discrimination but as an initiative to build confidence, it may be useful to have at least one Muslim inspector or sub-inspector in the police stations in Muslim-concentrated areas, Muslim health personnel in health units located in such areas, a few Muslim teachers in schools located in such areas, and so on.

(p.167) 20. For enhancing the efficacy of infrastructure provision and to correct the current dismal situation, the Sachar Committee suggests the following measures: (a) Sensitization of service staff regarding issues of social exclusion can be useful in reducing these problems. (b) Credible NGOs, with the necessary expertise, from the Muslim community are few and far between. But many face problems in getting their organizations registered. The registration of trusts set up by the community, such as Wakf institutions and mosque committees, should be facilitated. Besides, there is the need to encourage the setting up of civil society organizations from amongst the Muslim community as well. Once again, the reach of such organizations is going to be very limited, and the responsibility of the state in providing primary health care and other infrastructure facilities remains the main hope for the poor, including Muslims. (c) Lack of access to crucial infrastructural facilities is another matter of concern for Muslims. Access to schools, health care, sanitation facilities, potable water, and means of daily transportation are some of the necessary facilities that the citizens can expect from the state. The government

would, therefore, be well advised that all villages and towns be provided with basic amenities, good quality government schools and health facilities, pukka approach roads, and general improvement in living conditions (supply of electricity, housing, clean drinking water, and sanitation). This is in the overall interest of India and not only Muslims. Not providing these basic facilities is a violation of human rights.

21. Many of the measures suggested here would become more efficacious if there is community participation. In fact, a partnership between the governments, the community, and the private sector may be quite useful to deal with problems faced by Muslims. In this context, better utilization of Wakf properties can provide partnership opportunities. A large number of Wakf properties spread all over the country has been in a state of neglect. Unscrupulous persons have often exploited them. This has been possible because the administration of Wakf properties has been slack. The report has pointed out the deficiencies and flaws in the management and suggested the necessary legal and administrative steps for remedy. These would merit the immediate attention **(p.168)** of the authorities so that better management of the properties results in raising resources for many welfare activities, some of which can be undertaken in partnership with the government and the private sector.

Although the Sachar Committee Report recognizes caste among Indian Muslims even to the extent of noticing SCs and STs apart from large sections of OBCs, it did not mention about specific forms of Muslim reservation and, in fact, argued against it.²⁶ In this regard, public policy for affirmative action needs to be distinguished from the model of reservation that is already functioning in India. Here, one must remember that the discourse of affirmative action is evolved within the social, historical, and constitutional context of the United States of America, while reservation as an instrument of social justice is the prime ameliorative policy to address the unequal access of disadvantaged groups in higher education in India.²⁷ Reservation for Muslims is already available in the three southern states of Kerala, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu partly due to the lineage of colonial policies and partly due to the strong backward classes movement in the region where the overwhelming majority of Muslim population is categorized as OBCs and Most Backward Classes (MBCs).²⁸ In 2007, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi **(p.169)** announced 'exclusive reservation' for both Muslims and Christians in government services and educational institutions.²⁹ In the same year, the Ranganath Misra Commission Report (2007) was prepared, which recommended 10 per cent reservation of seats for Muslims in non-minority educational institutions, and 10 per cent reservation for Muslims in government jobs.³⁰ But the report was not tabled in Parliament until late 2009.³¹ Only one state, West Bengal, has so far implemented the recommendation of the Ranganath Misra Commission.

In 2010, the Left Front government in West Bengal implemented the policy of 10 per cent reservation in government jobs for which OBC Muslims would be eligible to compete in addition to the already existing 7 per cent reservation that was meant for OBCs in the state. **(p.170)** The Trinamool Congress-led government later extended the 10 per cent quota in higher education as well. Also, the Trinamool-led West Bengal government expanded the lists of both the OBC Category A—More Backward, and OBC Category B—Backward to include more groups to the state OBC lists. OBC A and OBC B lists include OBCs among both Hindu and Muslim communities. In 2017, out of 174 OBC castes, 115 Muslim groups comprising nearly 90 per cent of the state's total Muslim population have been enlisted as OBCs. In 2017, out of 81 groups (*jatis*) listed as More Backward (Category A), 73 are OBC Muslims, and 8 are OBC Hindus who are eligible for 10 per cent reservation in higher education and government jobs. In the case of Backward (Category B), out of 93 groups (*jatis*), 42 belong to OBC Muslims, 50 belong to OBC Hindus, and 1 group belongs to SC Christians, all of whom are eligible for 7 per cent reservation in higher education and government jobs. At present, there is 17 per cent reservation for OBCs in state-funded higher education and government jobs for which Muslim groups in both OBC A and OBC B lists can compete. This has increased the educational and job opportunities for significant sections of Muslims in the state of West Bengal.

Besides 10 per cent reservation for Muslims and 5 per cent reservation for other minorities in government jobs, the Misra Commission Report recommended SC status for Dalits in all religions. At present, SC status is enjoyed by Dalits among the Hindus, Sikhs, and Buddhists.³² It also recommended a sub-quota of 8.4 per cent for religious minorities in the 27 per cent OBC quota, as the Mandal Commission Report suggested that minorities constitute 8.4 per cent of the total OBC population. In this regard, out of 8.4 per cent sub-quota for religious minorities, it specifically earmarked 'an internal break-up of 6 per cent for the Muslims (commensurate with their 73 per cent share in the total minority population at the national level) and 2.4 per cent for the other minorities—with minor adjustments in accordance with population of various minorities in various States and UTs [Union Territories]'.³³

(p.171) One could argue that since positive discrimination in the form of reservation of seats in higher education and in state and central government jobs are ensured by the constitutional guarantees for SCs, STs, and OBCs, a similar demand for reservation could be justified for the SCs and OBCs within the Muslim community on the basis of the recommendations of the Ranganath Misra Commission Report.³⁴ This is because the reservation for socially and educationally backward communities have indeed strengthened the access of disadvantaged groups to higher education when compared with the Muslim minorities, who are lagging behind others in higher education with high levels of drop-outs and lack of incentives complemented by a flawed approach, which have together created conditions for unequal access for the Muslims in higher

education.³⁵ However, the Sachar Committee Report noted that more than higher education, the completion of school education seems to be the primary hurdle for the Muslims as the 'drop-out rates among Muslims are highest at the level of primary, middle and higher secondary compared to all the SRCs'.³⁶ The report mentioned that 'in the transition from secondary to college education, Muslims perform **(p.172)** somewhat better than SCs and STs'.³⁷ In other words, if Muslim students are given a better opportunity to complete school education, then the probability of them finishing college education is higher than other marginalized groups such as SCs and STs.

This does not mean that Muslims are not lagging behind the Hindu upper castes in terms of college education as it is evident from the Sachar Committee Report, which pointed out that 'while only 23 per cent of the SC/ST students who complete secondary education are likely to complete college education, this percentage is 26 per cent for Muslims and 34 per cent for other groups'.³⁸ Moreover, in urban India, the share of graduates across various disciplines among SCs, STs, OBCs, and even upper-caste Muslims is far less than their share of the total urban population.³⁹ In fact, an empirical study based on NSSO data analysis has shown that SCs, STs, OBCs, and Muslims are severely under-represented in India's colleges considering their population share.⁴⁰ When comparing 2004-5 NSSO data with that of 2011-12, it is found that the overall situation regarding the low share of graduates among disadvantaged groups has not changed much. As the Kundu Committee Report observed, 'Among Hindus, General Hindus register highest rate of graduate or higher level of education in 2011-12, whereas SC/ST had the lowest rate (2.6 per cent). OBC Muslims were also equal to SC/ST Hindus in this respect. Muslims generally do slightly better with completion rate of 6 per cent in 2011-12.'⁴¹ However, reservation cannot be the sole solution **(p.173)** as Muslims, to a significant extent, lack the cultural capital concerning educational access and educational entitlement to take benefits out of it, mainly in north India.

The Sachar Committee argues that instead of reservation, the three distinctive Muslim groups of Ashrafs (Muslim upper castes), Ajlafas (Muslim OBCs), and Arzals (minutely numbered Muslim SCs/STs)⁴² require different types of affirmative action. The Sachar Committee Report noted that 'the second group, Ajlafas, need additional attention which could be similar to that of Hindu-OBCs' while 'the third group, **(p.174)** those with similar traditional occupation as that of the SCs, may be designated as MBCs as they need multifarious measures, including reservation, as they are "cumulatively oppressed"'.⁴³ However, in the context of the constitutional problem of reservation on religious lines, one should argue for an expansion of Muslim OBC, SC, and ST lists both at the state and central levels because the crux of the Sachar Committee Report is not merely about Muslim deprivation, backwardness, and exclusion but also about intra-group differences among the Muslims as between Ashrafs, Ajlafas, and Arzals.⁴⁴ In fact, the Pasmanda Muslim Mahaj (Backward Class Muslim

Association) and OBC Muslims would back such differential treatment in providing affirmative action and would demand reservation to only the Muslim OBCs for 10–15 years as they point out the persistent disparity in educational attainment between Ashrafs and non-Ashrafs.⁴⁵ There is also compelling academic literature that argues about how affirmative action for the entire Muslim community is not only politically dangerous given that it would necessarily violate the provisions of our secular constitution, but it would also be counterproductive as total Muslim reservation might benefit the upper strata of the community.⁴⁶ With these things in mind, one can argue that apart from the recommendations and policy suggestions of the Sachar Committee, many of which overlapped with the then prime minister's 15 point programme for the welfare of minorities, one might also specifically demand the following measures with immediate effect in addition to the Sachar recommendations:

- (p.175)** 1. Expand the list of Muslim OBCs by proper enlistment across all states and incorporate all Muslim OBCs in the overall central OBC list.
2. Expand the lists of SCs and STs by including the Muslim SCs and Muslim STs mainly found in Lakshadweep and some North-Eastern states.
3. A scheme of coaching classes for competitive examinations should be implemented by the University Grants Commission as was introduced earlier in 1984 for recruitment to services under the central and state governments and in public sector undertakings (PSUs) and for admission to engineering, medical, agriculture, and management courses as also for acquiring proficiency in typing, shorthand, computer, and secretarial courses. These coaching classes can be coordinated by both the central and state universities by opening up new study centres in various campuses. Starting remedial coaching for Muslim minorities for all-India and state-level competitive exams can be centrally coordinated by the National Minorities Development and Finance Corporation (NMDFC) in central universities and the State Minorities Development and Finance Corporations (SMDFCs) in state universities.
4. Increase the number of minority representatives in Parliament and state assemblies through proper and proportionate candidature of persons belonging to the minority groups from different political parties.
5. Provide hostel accommodation to Muslim *working* women in both urban and semi-urban areas.
6. Spend separately 15 per cent of both state and central budget in Muslim-dominated areas in school education, technical education, health care and medical facilities, hospitals, panchayat schemes, housing, small-scale industries, cottage industries, urban development, municipal affairs, agriculture, irrigation, fertilizers, and power as a separate sub-plan.

7. Immediately start merit cum means scholarships for Muslim students, right from the primary level to higher education.
8. Chalk out proper guidelines for the recognition of minority-managed institutions. The Ministry for Human Resource Development should prepare policy norms and principles for the **(p.176)** recognition of minority-managed educational institutions, and these should be circulated to state governments to enable them in preparing detailed guidelines in this matter.
9. Concessions should be given to all Muslim students at par with Hindu OBCs at the school and college/university level pertaining to differential fee structure, admission, and application fees. Similarly, Muslim SCs/STs should also be given benefits of the concessions mentioned above at par with Hindu SCs/STs at all levels under the constitutional provisions of 'educationally backward communities'.
10. The centre and state governments should assist community initiatives for building interest-free banking facilities in Muslim localities under the interest-free banking system model that already exists and successfully functions in some parts of India, South Asia, West Asia, and South-East Asian Muslim countries.⁴⁷
11. There should be the establishment of more educational institutions with the regional languages as the medium of instruction in those Muslim localities where Urdu is not a principal spoken language.
12. Add the component of gender and minorities in the strategy of inclusiveness for admissions in higher education as recommended by the Sachar Committee Report.

The alternative model of 'multiple deprivation points' for both males and females of all SRCs may be of the following (Tables 3.3 and 3.4):

Table 3.3 Strategy of Inclusiveness for Admissions in Higher Education (Males)

| | |
|--|-----|
| Total Points | 100 |
| *Assessment of merit to the maximum of | 60 |
| *Assessment of backwardness to the maximum of | 40 |
| Backwardness to be defined as the sum of the following (each with about one-third weight) | |
| 1) Household income (income criteria to be revised periodically) | 13 |
| 2) Backward district (list to be updated on an annual basis) or residence in a notified urban slum | 13 |

| | |
|---|----|
| 3) Backward class (assessed based on a combination of family occupation, caste, and minorities) | 14 |
|---|----|

Source: Author.

Note: This is an alternative model of multiple deprivation points suggested by the author by considering the dimension of gender disadvantage based on policy regarding 'Strategy of Inclusiveness for Admissions in Higher Education Institutions' as suggested by the Sachar Committee Report.

Table 3.4 Strategy of Inclusiveness for Admissions in Higher Education (Females)

| | |
|--|-----|
| Total Points | 100 |
| *Assessment of merit to the maximum of | 55 |
| *Assessment of backwardness to the maximum of | 45 |
| Backwardness to be defined as the sum of the following (each with about one-third weight) | |
| 1) Household income (income criteria to be revised periodically) | 15 |
| 2) Backward district (list to be updated on an annual basis) or residence in a notified urban slum | 14 |
| 3) Backward class (assessed based on a combination of family occupation, caste, and minorities) | 16 |

Source: Author.

Note: This is an alternative model of multiple deprivation points suggested by the author by considering the dimension of gender disadvantage based on policy regarding 'Strategy of Inclusiveness for Admissions in Higher Education Institutions' as suggested by the Sachar Committee Report.

Politics of Affirmative Action

One has to acknowledge the fact that the Sachar Committee Report has made a mark in the public discourse in shaping and throwing up essential debates on the issues of Muslim backwardness, hindrances, and disadvantage. It has provided us with a vast pool of data besides making a crucial political intervention in instigating larger political **(p.177)** **(p.178)** debates in and around the issue of the political question of Muslim marginality; but the report stops short of making a strong case of Muslim discrimination. Nonetheless, keeping in mind the uphill task that the Sachar Committee has had to achieve, it should be congratulated at the earliest.

However, even before the publication of the Sachar Committee Report, commentators on Muslim minority affairs argued that the terms of reference of

the Sachar Committee were, in some respects, narrowly defined. This is because many questions that the Committee was asked to answer were related to data that the government already possessed, and hence, were superfluous.⁴⁸ Let us briefly recapitulate a contemporary history. The central government previously appointed similar commissions and committees to ascertain the status of Muslim minorities. The first non-Congress government at the centre set up a Minorities Commission in 1978. This was ignored by the Indira Gandhi government and a separate committee headed by Dr V.A. Sayid Mohammad was set up in 1980 to study the status of minorities and OBCs. Soon after, Dr Gopal Singh was given the charge of the committee on minorities, and this committee submitted its report in June 1983. Mysteriously, the contents of this report were not officially released till 1990 when it was laid on the table of the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha.⁴⁹ However, no implementation of the recommendations of the Gopal Singh Committee report was made. In 1995, the National Commission for Minorities (NCM) collected data on the share of minorities in police and paramilitary services, which concluded that the Muslim presence was 'deplorably disproportionate to their population'. In May 1996, a 12-member subgroup of the planning commission on minorities provided detailed data and came to similar conclusion of 'serious imbalances and inequities in respect to the representation of minorities in all public employment; [recommending that] top priority should be given to the adoption of measures to rectify this situation'. Subsequently, the NCM has been submitting periodic reports of similar nature. However, no policy implementation has taken place. Therefore, **(p.179)** the findings of the Sachar Committee Report are not new and have not surprised the informed population. The only hope was that after 60 years of Independence, with the government officially recognizing the collective plight of the Indian Muslims there should have been proper implementation of the various policies in order to address the grave socio-economic and educational backwardness of the community as the country cannot progress without developing a considerable section of its population.

In the Sachar Committee Report, there is no mention of the *specific problems* of Muslim women as pointed out earlier. The terms of reference ignore the deleterious impact of the neoliberal economic policies of the government on Muslim OBC artisanal groups, who account for a large section of the Muslim community. Instead, the focus is on Muslim OBC representation in government services at a time when such jobs are rapidly contracting owing precisely to the government's economic policies, manifested through a retreat of the state from avoiding responsibilities of major economic activities. The factor of economic reforms should have been taken into account by the committee in analysing the job prospects and other living conditions of marginalized groups such as Indian Muslims by creating a separate chapter in dealing with the issue. It is true that the report makes partial comments in a couple of instances such as the following: 'Despite economic boom Muslims have to bear the brunt of the so

called “competitive” forces unleashed by liberalisation’;⁵⁰ and ‘Displacement from traditional occupations has contributed to Muslims being deprived of their means of livelihood.’⁵¹ These statements show the increasing socio-economic marginalization of the community under neoliberal globalization; yet, the report stops short of making a substantial critique in the form of a specific chapter on ‘economic reforms and Indian Muslims’.

The question of communal bias and discrimination in Muslim recruitment to government services or in the allocation of resources for development is also not addressed directly. All this naturally limits the scope and overall usefulness of the Sachar Committee.⁵² However, **(p.180)** recommendations and policy suggestions it has made are not as rigorous as its findings, and especially in formulating a well-chalked out (sub)plan in public policymaking. The importance of the committee lies in the possibility that it will help to sensitize many about Muslim deprivation, representation, discrimination, and exclusion with its report that is full of valuable data and an updated accounts of the actual living conditions of India’s Muslim minorities.

Finally, turning to the political agenda of affirmative action including reservation, one must note that it is no less than a relief rather than a transformative change in the affairs of excluded and marginalized groups such as Dalits, Adivasis, women, and Muslims. The dominant public discourse more often than not equates affirmative action with reservation. But one needs to look beyond a simple model of reservation as the neoliberal policy regime will continue to perpetuate sharp inequalities between various sectors of the population even if there is reservation for specific disadvantaged groups. However, saying so, I would argue that the normative position of progressive politics cannot afford to oppose the policy of affirmative action. In fact, a Marxist theorist has argued that reservations can be ‘efficiency-enhancing even in the short-run’ and can be defended on the grounds of both ‘efficiency’ and ‘distributive justice’.⁵³

But what could be an ethical argument for affirmative action and reservation for the Muslim minorities in India when there is no legal or constitutional basis for such policies except the recommendations of the central government-appointed Sachar and Ranganath Misra Commission? Given the fact that a sizeable section of Indian Muslims are OBCs (around 40 per cent according to the Sachar Committee Report), the recommendation for 10 per cent reservation in jobs for Muslim OBCs could be justified by the constitutional provision of ‘social and educationally backward communities’ given that there is **(p.181)** at present, no other legal justification for reservation in the name of religion. Here, one must note that upper-caste Muslims are not always doing better than OBC Muslims. In fact, the Kundu Committee Report suggests that in 2011–12, in the age group of 15–29 years in the labour force, the unemployment rate among upper-caste Muslims (7.34 per cent among males and 10.75 per cent among females in rural

areas and 12 per cent among males and 14.45 per cent among females in urban areas) was significantly higher than OBC Muslims (5.27 per cent among males and 19.49 per cent among females in rural areas and 5.98 per cent among males and 12.14 per cent among females in urban areas) in most respects.⁵⁴ However, despite such high unemployment rates among upper-caste Muslim youth than OBC Muslims, barring the rural areas, OBC Muslims are relatively more deprived than upper-caste Muslims, particularly in all urban areas, when considering monthly per capita consumption expenditure (MPCE) in 2011–12.⁵⁵

In this regard, I would argue that besides the Sachar Committee and Misra Commission recommendations, which certainly have a bearing on the public policymaking of the Indian government, the policy of affirmative action and reservation for Indian Muslims can be ethically defended not as the compensation for past discrimination and historic injustices, but on the grounds of countering specific oppression against the Muslim minorities in the form of ‘unconscious aversions and stereotypes and from the assumption that the point of view of the privileged is neutral’.⁵⁶ The stereotypes, myths, and prejudices about Muslims in India exist in various forms and in different domains. In the previous chapter, I have dealt with the various stereotypes about Muslims in the realm of Hindi cinema. Here, one must understand that besides the arguments for representation of marginalized and inadequately represented groups such as Muslims in government jobs and in various sectors of the economy that both the Sachar Committee and Misra Commission Reports point out, an ethical defence for affirmative **(p.182)** action for Indian Muslims in general, could be made on grounds that there exist such aversions and stereotypes against Muslim minorities in India. Thus, affirmative action for Muslims cannot be grounded on compensation for historic injustices and past discrimination during the entire period of the post-colonial Indian nation-state, because such claims are difficult to prove without any comprehensive study or survey over a sustained period rather than mere anecdotes of victimhood from sections of the Muslim community in India. But ethical arguments for affirmative action for Indian Muslims can indeed be defended on the twin grounds of (a) under-representation in most walks of life and (b) persistence of aversion and continuous reproduction of stereotypes against Muslim minorities in India.

While defending the ethical arguments for affirmative action for Indian Muslims, one must also note that progressive politics cannot just be contented with the policies of affirmative action for marginalized groups such as Dalits, Adivasis, Muslims, and women. Instead, it must evoke the *limits* of affirmative action that perfectly gel with the negotiated terms of the power bloc in India. Thus, affirmative action can benefit, empower, and give relief to certain sections of the population, and progressive politics *must defend* and *demand* those from the state and non-state institutions. But until and unless a vision of an alternative society is constructed around the normative ideals of equality and distributive justice, the transformative struggles for emancipation and liberation of the

excluded would only be restricted to a utopia. Therefore, even if affirmative actions continue, the simultaneous persistence of the neoliberal regime in India will cause havoc for the people primarily comprising of all marginalized and excluded groups with inequality, unemployment, deprivation, so on.

Although the Sachar Committee prescribed affirmative action as a remedy to the significant problems faced by Indian Muslims, however, it did not specifically mention the impact of the neoliberal regime on Indian Muslims. We know from the analysis of the first and current chapters of this book that livelihood conditions of Muslims along with Dalits and Adivasis have been relatively worse when compared with other social groups during the phase of neoliberal economic reforms. Acceptance of such an impact of neoliberalism on several excluded and marginalized groups by the government-appointed committee (**p. 183**) would mean recognition of an antagonistic frontier along with the acknowledgement of an adversary of the people, namely the neoliberal regime that is currently enjoying hegemony in the governmental affairs. However, acknowledgment of socio-economic backwardness and communal discrimination faced by Indian Muslims in the Sachar Committee Report can open up the *conditions of possibilities* for a progressive political articulation that can raise the issues of deprivation, discrimination, and exclusion of Muslims and can put forward a series of demands to resolve the problems currently faced by the Muslim minorities in India. At the same time, it should also be remembered that fighting for mere particularist demands for narrow sectarian interests of any single community is not going to help in taking forward the agenda of changing the current status quo of neoliberal dispensation. Therefore, the democratic demands of Indian Muslims must be supplemented with a programme of coordinating with other democratic demands of Dalits, Adivasis, women, workers, and peasants and transform those aggregated demands to popular demands for transcending the current political regime of neoliberal hegemony.

The accumulation of unfulfilled democratic demands of various sections of the population needs to be politically articulated in the form of a much greater populist demand for social transformation so that the neoliberal regime itself becomes evidently identified as the cause of the most pressing problems for the Indian people. This is why the specific politics of particularist *demands* for and around affirmative action and the fulfilment of the same are nothing short of a politics of *appropriation* and *accommodation* by the power bloc in order to close down a possibility of a politics of radical alternative that seeks to alter the power relations currently prevalent in society in favour of the people. In this process of articulation of *demands* by separate and particularist groups such as different excluded and marginalized sections of the population, namely Dalits, Adivasis, women, and Muslims and the fulfilment of those demands in a differential manner or in isolation by the power bloc makes the construction of an equivalential chain of various demands and groups difficult.

Recall Laclau's observation in the epigraph of this chapter: 'democratic demands' can be 'accommodated within an expanding hegemonic formation' whereas 'popular demands present a challenge to the (p.184) hegemonic formation'.⁵⁷ In India, the policy of affirmative action is such an accommodationist strategy of the power bloc to absorb the democratic demands of various particularist groups in differential way, one isolated from the other. Such an accommodationist strategy is the safety valve of the neoliberal power bloc as well. This is because the non-fulfilment of several democratic demands could open up the possibility of a liaison between several other unfulfilled democratic demands of marginalized groups and can potentially transform those unsatisfied democratic demands into popular ones by challenging the hegemony of contemporary neoliberal regime. Much of Indian politics has been what Laclau calls the transformation from 'requests to claims' by various political actors and the fulfilment of several democratic demands by the ruling power bloc in order to sustain status quo on the one hand, and the hindrances posed by the Indian state in the transformation of democratic demands to popular demands on the other hand. It is in this context that the politics and policy around affirmative action become intimately connected to the politics of status quo while accommodating the democratic demands of Dalits, Adivasis, women, and Muslims. As a result of the lack of an equivalential chain among the above-mentioned marginalized and excluded groups and in their articulation of demands, the construction of the 'people' and their fight against the (p.185) antagonistic frontier of the neoliberal regime in India also take a back seat. As Laclau points out:

The frustration of a series of social demands makes possible the movement from isolated democratic demands to equivalential popular ones. One first dimension of the break is that, at its root, there is the experience of a *lack*, a gap which has emerged in the harmonious continuity of the social. There is a fullness of the community which is missing. This is decisive: the construction of the 'people' will be the attempt to give a name to that absent fullness. Without this initial breakdown of something in the social order—however minimal that something could initially be—there is no possibility of antagonism, frontier, or, ultimately, 'people'. This initial experience is not only, however, an experience of lack. Lack, as we have seen, is linked to a demand which is not met. But this involves bringing into the picture the power which has not met the demand. A demand is always addressed to somebody. So from the very beginning we are confronted with a dichotomic division between unfulfilled social demands, on the one hand, and an unresponsive power, on the other. Here we begin to see why the *plebs* sees itself as the *populus*, the part as the whole: since the fullness of the community is merely the imaginary reverse of a situation lived as *deficient being*, those who are responsible for this cannot be a legitimate part of the community; the chasm between them is

irretrievable ... the movement from democratic to popular demands presupposes a plurality of subject positions: demands, isolated at the beginning, emerge at different points of the social fabric, and the transition to a popular subjectivity consists in establishing an equivalential bond between them.⁵⁸

It is interesting to note that the political system in India has often tried to address the issues of marginality, exclusion, deprivation, and backwardness of weaker sections such as Dalits, Adivasis, OBCs, and women through the mechanisms of varied forms of affirmative action or positive discrimination with a core focus on reservation in education and jobs. In the case of Muslims too, a policy of affirmative action is often repeated within policy debates in neoliberal India. The evidence of a policy of affirmative action towards Muslims is visible in the recommendations and policy suggestions of the Sachar Committee Report and a plea for 10 per cent Muslim reservation in education and jobs in the Ranganath Misra Commission Report (2007). In India, more often **(p.186)** than not, various excluded groups only stay content with sops such as affirmative action while the neoliberal status quo becomes secure without articulating a greater challenge in the form of a popular demand for transforming the system. In such a situation, the hegemonic politics of neoliberalism becomes dominant, and the counter-hegemonic politics of the people become weaker in offering a simultaneous politics of resistance and social transformation.

The nature of contemporary neoliberalism in India marked by job loss and jobless growth trajectory along with income inequality and forced displacement inexorably worsens the living conditions of the Indian people. Therefore, any fundamental resolution of the socio-economic deprivation of any particularist marginalized identity group cannot just rely on social justice politics that would argue the case for such groups in and around affirmative action and reservation. But to address the socio-economic backwardness of the marginalized groups, one has to think about the question of distributive justice in a possible post-neoliberal order. I shall discuss these issues of counter-hegemonic political visions and a possible post-neoliberal order in the Epilogue.

Coming back to the question of democratic demands of particular identity groups, it should be remembered that fighting for mere *particularist demands* for narrow sectarian interests of any single community is not going to help in changing the current status quo of neoliberal dispensation. Nor will such a politics of particularism fundamentally resolve the socio-economic problems of marginalized groups. Therefore, the democratic demands of one marginalized identitarian group should be supplemented with an agenda of making an equivalential relation with other democratic demands of several marginalized groups, and transforming those aggregated demands to the popular demand of challenging the current political cum policy regime of neoliberalism. In this respect, what are the different modes of political articulations found among the

Muslim community in India? What kind of democratic demands are put forward by the prominent Muslim organizations in the country? I shall discuss these questions in the next chapter.

Notes:

(*) Ernesto Laclau, *On Populist Reason* (London: Verso, 2005), pp. 73–4, 82.

(†) Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, with a new foreword by Danielle Allen (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2011 [1990]), pp. 11–12.

(¹) Zoya Hasan, *Politics of Inclusion: Castes, Minorities, and Affirmative Action* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2011); Vidhu Verma, *Non-discrimination and Equality in India: Contesting Boundaries of Social Justice* (London: Routledge, 2012).

(²) *Social, Economic and Educational Status of the Muslim Community of India: A Report* [hereinafter Sachar Committee Report] (New Delhi: Government of India, 2006), p. 237.

(³) Sachar Committee Report, p. 77.

(⁴) See Sachar Committee Report, p. 39.

(⁵) *The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010–2050* (Washington D.C.: Pew Research Center, 2015), pp. 73, 95.

(⁶) *The Future of World Religions*, pp. 5, 74, 95.

(⁷) NSSO 55th Round (Report No. 468, published in 2001) and the *India Human Development Report* (New Delhi: NCAER, 1999).

(⁸) Sachar Committee Report, p. 87.

(⁹) The issues of Muslim women have been discussed in the Sachar Committee Report in very small subsections as in ‘Identity and Gender’ in chapter 2 (‘Public Perceptions and Perspectives’), pp. 12–13, and in the same chapter with a short subsection titled ‘Women’s Education’, pp. 19–20.

(¹⁰) Sachar Committee Report, p. 13.

(¹¹) Sachar Committee Report, p. 19.

(¹²) Sachar Committee Report, p. 20.

(¹³) Sachar Committee Report, p. 22.

⁽¹⁴⁾ For a detailed overview of socio-economic and educational backwardness of Muslim women, see Zoya Hasan and Ritu Menon, *Unequal Citizens: A Study of Muslim Women in India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004); Zoya Hasan and Ritu Menon, *Educating Muslim Girls: A Comparison of Five Indian Cities* (New Delhi: Women Unlimited, 2005).

⁽¹⁵⁾ A study on various socio-economic and demographic aspects of Muslim women in rural Bengal by Sekh Rahim Mondal, *Rural Muslim Women: Role and Status* (New Delhi: Northern Book Centre, 2005), is helpful for carrying forward such a research on a much broader scale for an all-India study.

⁽¹⁶⁾ For more details on these issues, see Imtiaz Ahmad, ed., *Divorce and Remarriage among Muslims in India* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2003); S.A.H. Moinuddin, *Divorce and Muslim Women* (Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 2000); Saukath Azim, *Muslim Women: Emerging Identity* (Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 1997); Naseem Ahmed, *Liberation of Muslim Women* (Delhi: Kalpaz Publications, 2001).

⁽¹⁷⁾ On these issues of everyday lives of Muslim women in relation to divorce, identity formation happens not only around religious doctrine but with an intersection of multiple factors of class, religion, and gender. See Zoya Hasan and Ritu Menon, eds, *The Diversity of Muslim Women's Lives in India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005).

⁽¹⁸⁾ On this issue see Zoya Hasan, 'Minority Identity, State Policy and the Political Process', pp. 59-73; Kirti Singh, 'The Constitution and Muslim Personal Law', pp. 96-107; Shahida Lateef, 'Defining Women through Legislation', pp. 38-58; Maitrayee Mukhopadhyay, 'Between Community and State: The Question of Women's Rights and Personal Laws', pp. 108-29, all chapters in *Forging Identities: Gender, Communities and the State*, edited by Zoya Hasan (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1994).

⁽¹⁹⁾ See Sachar Committee Report, pp. 171-3 and p. 371 (Appendix Table 9.6). The committee received information and data of Andhra Pradesh, which is the only state that shows a representation of Muslims in the home department that is more than their population share but the state was not mentioned in Table 9.6, p. 171 and Appendix Table 9.6, p. 371; all other states have considerable deficits in the presence of Muslims in their police forces; see Sachar Committee Report, p. 172.

⁽²⁰⁾ The Committee received data for only 520,000 employees belonging to the Border Security Force (BSF), Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), Central Industrial Security Force (CISF), and Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB), out of the total 1,900,000 employees in various security agencies, including the three wings of the defence forces for which data is not available. The share of Muslims in BSF, CRPF, CISF, and SSB combined is 3.6 per cent at higher and 4.6 per cent at

lower levels. The overall share of Muslims in the National Security Agencies for which data is available is only 4 per cent. See Sachar Committee Report, pp. 167–8.

(²¹) Sachar Committee Report, pp. 172–3.

(²²) Annual Report of the National Commission for Minorities, 1998, p. 27.

(²³) For a detailed account on this issue, see Asghar Ali Engineer and Amarjit S. Narang, eds, *Minorities and Police in India* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2006).

(²⁴) For a detailed account on the police biases in communal riots, see Rowena Robinson, *Tremors of Violence: Muslim Survivors of Ethnic Strife in Western India* (New Delhi: Sage, 2005) and Siddharth Varadarajan, *Gujarat: The Making of a Tragedy* (New Delhi: Penguin, 2002).

(²⁵) See chapter 12, 'Looking Ahead: Perspectives and Recommendations', Sachar Committee Report, pp. 237–54.

(²⁶) See Sachar Committee Report, chapter 10, 'The Muslim OBCs and Affirmative Action', pp. 189–216.

(²⁷) P.S. Krishnan, 'Indian Social Justice versus American Affirmative Action and the Case of Higher Education', in *Equalizing Access: Affirmative Action in Higher Education in India, United States, and South Africa*, edited by Zoya Hasan and Martha C. Nussbaum (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 100–20.

(²⁸) In Kerala, OBC Muslims have 12 per cent reservation in jobs whereas there is 9 per cent reservation in professional colleges, and in Karnataka they have 4 per cent reservation with the creamy layer ruling based on income, landholding, and government jobs. In Tamil Nadu, Muslim OBCs get the benefits of reservation. In Andhra Pradesh, there is 4 per cent reservation for OBC Muslims in educational institutions and government jobs. Recently, the Telengana state government has passed a bill in the state assembly to raise the quota for OBC Muslims to 12 per cent. For a historical overview of Muslim reservation in the southern states, see *Report of the Backward Classes Commission*, vol. IV (New Delhi: Government of India, 1980), pp. 147–54; P. Radhakrishnan, 'Karnataka Backward Classes', *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 25, no. 32 (11 August 1990), pp. 1749–54; P. Radhakrishnan, 'Backward Classes in Tamil Nadu: 1872–1988', *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 25, no. 10 (10 March 1990), pp. 509–20; Premalata Sharma, *The Problems of Dalit and OBCs* (Jaipur: Book Enclave, 2002); K.C. Yadav and Rajbir Singh, *India's Unequal Citizens: A Study of Other Backward Classes* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1994). For a comparison of Other Backward Classes across northern and southern states, see *Report of the*

Backward Classes Commission, vol. I (New Delhi: Government of India, 1980), pp. 31–6.

(²⁹) Tamil Nadu already implements a large reservation of 69 per cent in education. Making ‘exclusive reservation’ announcement in the state assembly during a debate on demand for grants to the minorities department as per news reports, Karunanidhi said his government acted according to the recommendations of the state Backward Classes Commission, headed by retired judge of Madras High Court, M. Janardanam. See ‘Meanwhile, Tamil Nadu Stirs the Pot, Offers Job Quotas to Muslims, Christians’, *The Indian Express*, 6 April 2007 and ‘Nod for Reservation for Minorities: Tamil Nadu to Accept Backward Classes Commission’s Recommendation’, *The Hindu*, 6 April 2007, p. 7.

(³⁰) Originally published as the *Report of the National Commission for Religious and Linguistic Minorities* (New Delhi: Ministry of Minority Affairs, Government of India, 2007).

(³¹) On 18 December 2009, the then minority affairs minister, Salman Khurshid, presented it in the Lok Sabha. See PTI news report: ‘Ranganath Commission Recommends 10% Quota for Muslims’, *Times of India* (online version), 18 December 2009, available at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Ranganath-Commission-recommends-10-quota-for-Muslims/articleshow/5352455.cms>, accessed on 13 October 2016.

(³²) Ranganath Misra Commission Report, p. 115, available at <http://www.minorityaffairs.gov.in/reports/national-commission-religious-and-linguistic-minorities>, accessed on 10 April 2018.

(³³) Ranganath Misra Commission Report, p. 153.

(³⁴) Central government jobs and centrally funded higher educational institutions have 15 per cent reservation for SCs, 7.5 per cent for STs, and 27 per cent for OBCs. On the other hand, the state government jobs and state government-funded higher educational institutions have various quotas as each state has different state lists of SCs, STs, and OBCs according to their respective proportion in the state’s total population. See Ranganath Misra Commission Report, p. 123.

(³⁵) Zoya Hasan, ‘Trapped in an Invisible Present: Muslims and Disparities in Higher Education’, in *Equalizing Access: Affirmative Action in Higher Education in India, United States, and South Africa*, edited by Zoya Hasan and Martha C. Nussbaum (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 239–55. For a discussion on unequal access to higher education in terms of comparing the enrolment rates across all social categories such as caste and communities in the context of growing privatization and commoditization of technical education, see Satish Deshpande, ‘Social Justice and Higher Education in India Today:

Markets, States, Ideologies, and Inequalities in a Fluid Context', in *Equalizing Access: Affirmative Action in Higher Education in India, United States, and South Africa*, edited by Zoya Hasan and Martha C. Nussbaum (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 212–38.

(³⁶) Sachar Committee Report, p. 62.

(³⁷) Sachar Committee Report, p. 62.

(³⁸) Sachar Committee Report, p. 62.

(³⁹) Satish Deshpande, 'Caste Quotas and Formal Inclusion in Indian Higher Education', in *Beyond Inclusion: The Practice of Equal Access in Indian Higher Education*, edited by Satish Deshpande and Usha Zacharias (New Delhi: Routledge, 2013), p. 19. Although the study is based on 2004–5 NSSO unit-level data, the overall situation in this regard has not changed much as evident from the Kundu Committee Report.

(⁴⁰) Aashish Mehta and Rana Hasan, 'Under-representation of Disadvantaged Classes in Colleges', *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 41, no. 35 (2 September 2006).

(⁴¹) *Post Sachar Evaluation Committee Report* (New Delhi: Ministry of Minority Affairs, 2014), p. 91. The committee was chaired by Professor Amitabh Kundu and is also known as the Kundu Committee Report.

(⁴²) The group of Arzals is less than 1 per cent of the total Muslim population; the Sachar Committee Report makes it clear that by the early 2000s, OBC Muslims constituted around 40.7 per cent and General Muslims around 59.3 per cent, which together totalled 100 per cent. Therefore, the SC/ST Muslims must be nominal and are taken into account within the backward caste Muslims (see Sachar Committee Report, pp. 203–4). According to the 1991 census, Muslim STs accounted for only 0.16 per cent of the total Muslim population, with a high concentration in Lakshadweep, Himachal Pradesh, and Mizoram, where the percentages of Muslim STs were 98.51 per cent, 17.15 per cent, and 7.40 per cent of the total Muslim population respectively (see Sachar Committee Report, p. 379). Moreover, the Sachar Committee Report reveals that according to the 1991 Census, ST Muslims accounted 'for only 0.25% of the total ST population of the country. The highest proportion of Muslims declared as STs is found in Lakshadweep, where Muslims constitute the entire ST population (99.74%). Muslim share in the ST population of Himachal Pradesh (7%) is also quite significant. Elsewhere, the numbers of Muslim STs are minuscule. The Muslim ST population is only 1,70,428, whereas the total population of the STs stands at 6,77,58,285 (1991 Census)' (see Sachar Committee Report, p. 205). In fact, the Sachar Committee's member secretary, the noted demographer Abusaleh Shariff, has calculated from NSS estimates that SCs/STs among Indian Muslims

constitute around 1.3 per cent, the OBC Muslims around 39.2 per cent, and upper-caste Muslims around 59.5 per cent (see Abusaleh Shariff and Navaid Hamid, 'Indian Caste Census-2011: How Will It Affect the Muslims?', available at http://twocircles.net/2011may31/indian_caste_census2011_how_will_it_affect_muslims.html#.WACwOuh97IU,

accessed on 14 October 2016). One sociological report suggests that Dalit Muslims are the worst off in socio-economic parameters and there is a strong case to accord SC status to them. See Satish Deshpande and Geetika Bapna, *Dalits in the Muslim and Christian Communities: A Status Report on Current Social Scientific Knowledge*, prepared for National Commission of Minorities, January 2008.

(⁴³) Sachar Committee Report, p. 214.

(⁴⁴) A detailed analysis of these issues can be found in chapter 10 of Sachar Committee Report namely 'The Muslim OBCs and Affirmative Action', pp. 189–216.

(⁴⁵) Tanweer Fazal, '"Being Muslim" in Contemporary India: Nation, Identity, and Rights', in *Being Muslim in South Asia: Diversity and Daily Life*, edited by Robin Jeffrey and Ronojoy Sen (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 220..

(⁴⁶) Sanjeer Alam, 'Social Exclusion of Muslims in India and Deficient Debates about Affirmative Action: Suggestions for a New Approach', *South Asia Research*, vol. 30, no. 1 (2010), pp. 43–65; Sanjeer Alam, 'Affirmative Action for Muslims? Arguments, Contentions and Alternatives', *Studies in Indian Politics*, vol. 2, no. 2 (2014), pp. 215–29.

(⁴⁷) The interest-free banking system is highly successful in Muslim societies and is currently an important area of research in university economics departments in the Anglo-American and West Asian worlds.

(⁴⁸) Imran Ali and Yoginder Sikand, 'Socio-Economic Conditions of Muslims in India', available at <https://www.countercurrents.org/comm-sikand090206.htm>, accessed on 10 April 2018.

(⁴⁹) Hasan, 'Trapped in an Invisible Present', pp. 240, 253.

(⁵⁰) Sachar Committee Report, p. 21.

(⁵¹) Sachar Committee Report, p. 21.

(⁵²) This point is made in the preliminary report on the socio-economic condition of the Muslims in India prepared by Action Aid, Jahangirabad Media Institute, and Indian Social Institute, 2005, published as *National Study on Socio-*

Economic Condition of Muslims in India (New Delhi: Indian Social Institute, 2006).

(⁵³) Prabhat Patnaik, 'Affirmative Action and the "Efficiency Argument"', in *Equalizing Access: Affirmative Action in Higher Education in India, United States, and South Africa*, edited by Zoya Hasan and Martha C. Nussbaum (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 89–99.

(⁵⁴) Kundu Committee Report, pp. 25–6.

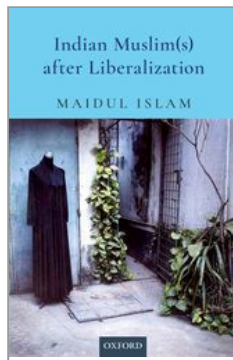
(⁵⁵) Kundu Committee Report, p. 36.

(⁵⁶) In the context of gender, ethnic, and racial minorities in the United States of America, Iris Marion Young precisely defends the affirmative action programmes on similar grounds while questioning the myth of the merit. See Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, pp. 12, 192–225.

(⁵⁷) Laclau's distinction between democratic and popular demands are based on the Marxist distinction of bourgeois-democratic or liberal-democratic and socialist demands. As Laclau argues, 'Democratic demands were inherently bourgeois, and essentially linked to the establishment of "liberal-democratic" regimes. Different from the (bourgeois)-democratic demands were the socialist ones, which involved transcending capitalist society and corresponded to a more advanced stage of historical development.... So the main distinction was between socialist and democratic demands; the inscription of the latter within bourgeois hegemony and the establishment of a liberal state were taken for granted' (see Ernesto Laclau, *On Populist Reason* [London: Verso, 2005], pp. 125–6). However, the criteria for which Laclau uses the term 'democratic demand' are of the following: (1) 'These demands are formulated *to* the system by an underdog of sorts—that there is an equalitarian dimension implicit in them; (2) that their very emergence presupposes some kind of exclusion or deprivation' to what Laclau calls 'deficient being' (see Laclau, *On Populist Reason*, p. 125).

(⁵⁸) See Laclau, *On Populist Reason*, pp. 85–6.

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Indian Muslim(s) After Liberalization

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Political Articulations of Indian Muslims in an Era of Globalization

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Abstract and Keywords

This chapter primarily analyses the politics of Muslim particularism. This politics is predominantly focused on the issues of Muslim identity (such as personal laws, blasphemy, minority status of educational institutions, and so on) and security. The chapter is also concerned with delineating the limits of such a narrow sectarian politics. It argues how the absence of progressive political leadership among Indian Muslims has created conditions in which the theological identity of the community has been foregrounded at the cost of class and citizenship identities of the Muslim minorities. This chapter tries to locate Muslim politics in India as part and parcel of a particular genre of *subaltern* politics with its specific dynamics of the peculiar rhetoric of victimhood, discrimination, and exclusion. Finally, the chapter charts out a possible political agency of progressive political articulation among Indian Muslims.

Keywords: Muslim particularism, personal laws, blasphemy, minority status, security, sectarian politics, subaltern politics, victimhood, discrimination, exclusion

Speaking initially in the third person, moderate Muslims might correctly say, 'In the face of colonial history and in the face of recent frustrations and defeat, Islam has an appeal for us; it is grounded in a doctrine we embrace and which has comprehensive pretensions and claims on us, including—crucially—on our polities, and this gives us a sense of autonomy and identity.' If I am right that this defensive attitude reflects a predominantly third-person perspective on ourselves, it will do no violence to the use of 'us' and 'we' here if we replace them with 'them' and 'they.'

This is, after all, the voice of a community's understanding of its own condition and its causes. It is the voice of the subject that takes itself to be an object. But then, if I am right, there should be place and possibility for the switch to the first person, for the voice of the subject as agent to say, 'This appeal of Islam is something we have uncritically and indiscriminately embraced out of demoralization and defeat, often allowing it to dominate our political actions, and it has gotten us nowhere; it is up to us to assess the relative merits of its diverse doctrinal commitments, up to us to work towards its reform, up to us to oppose the inviolability of the *Sharia*, to fashion a depoliticized Islam so that its appeal and relevance are spiritualist and universalist rather than to the polity, so that it does not remain perpetually exploitable by the Islamist (p.188) political factions, whom we oppose.' This is neither merely the passive voice nor the reactive voice. It is, bending language a bit, the active voice.

—Akeel Bilgrami*

Mere availability is on occasion enough to ensure the victory of a particular discourse...The discourse of a 'new order' is often accepted by several sectors, not because they particularly like its content but because it is the discourse of *an* order, of something that is presented as a credible alternative to a crisis and a generalized dislocation. This does not mean, of course, that *any* discourse putting itself forward as the embodiment of fullness will be accepted. The acceptance of a discourse depends on its credibility, and this will not be granted if its proposals clash with the basic principles informing the organization of a group.

—Ernesto Laclau†

(p.189) In the previous three chapters, I have discussed the socio-economic deprivation of Indian Muslims, the cultural stereotypes plaguing the community, and responses of the important ministerial committees of the Indian government in putting forward the issue of affirmative action and reservation for the Muslim minorities. In this chapter, I will discuss the prominent political articulations among Indian Muslims. But before doing so, let me discuss the essential academic literature that deals with various forms of political articulations in post-colonial India, on which there is voluminous literature. I am not going to summarize them as Hilal Ahmed has already incisively and critically engaged with different genres of academic writings that discuss the broad contours of Muslim politics in postcolonial India.¹ While making a detailed examination of extant academic literature on Indian Muslims from the 1960s to the 1990s, he classifies the academic research on Muslim politics into two broad categories: (a) the 'Muslim homogeneity perspective' coming out of the writings of Iqbal Ansari and Syed Shahabuddin that 'conceptualises Muslim community as a single political unit and concentrates on the Indian legal-constitutional

discourse of minority rights';² and (b) the 'secular heterogeneity perspective' coming out of the writings of several scholars that 'rejects the idea of the oneness of Muslim community and asserts that Muslim politics represents a kind of *communal* politics'.³ This second perspective carrying forward the 'secular heterogeneity' argument is further divided by Ahmed into four different categories: (a) 'social assimilation and Muslim politics', (b) 'class analysis of Muslim politics', (c) 'instrumentalist approach to Muslim politics', and (d) 'modern-liberal explanation of Muslim politics'.⁴

According to Ahmed, four principal arguments can be deduced from the 'Muslim homogeneity' perspective:

- (a) There is one collective Muslim politics, which represents the collective interest of Indian Muslims. (b) The Indian Constitutional framework is capable of protecting the plural character of Indian social life. **(p.190)** (c) Collective Muslim politics functions as the first push to the political systems so that they can work effectively without any failure. The active participation of Muslims in free, fair and regular elections at every level of the political system could be an example of this kind of democratic politics. (d) Collective Muslim politics also ensures that the broad objectives of the India-specific plurality are achieved. This is the kind of mass participation [to do] mass politics for social justice.⁵

In contrast, Ahmed argues that the scholars who put forward the 'social assimilation' thesis within the broad spectrum of 'secular heterogeneity perspective', particularly the sociological studies of T.N. Madan and Imtiaz Ahmad, is based on six propositions:

- (a) The social hierarchies among Muslims and the Islamic plurality in India are the constant and uniform factors which could legitimately be employed to study Muslim politics in India. (b) There is only one Muslim politics in India, which promotes separatism and communalism in the country and consequently is an anti-thesis of secular politics. (c) This Muslim politics is a direct result of Islamisation. (d) Islamisation is a process which has emerged because of increasing Sanskritization. (e) There is no independent agenda of Muslim politics. It does not invent potential issues for itself. Instead, it simply responds either to the agenda of the state or the politics of Hindu rightists. (f) There is no problem with the constitutional ideal as well as legal structure related to secularism in India. However, for achieving a truly secular state, a secular society is needed. Therefore, there is no need for Muslim politics of any kind.⁶

The second classification within the 'secular heterogeneity' perspective is what Ahmed classifies as the 'class analysis of Muslim politics'. In this respect, he identifies the arguments of Moin Shakir with the Marxist concept of 'false

consciousnesses' in understanding Muslim politics, while he places the writings of Asghar Ali Engineer as 'a more creative Marxist analysis of Muslim politics' by engaging with 'liberation theology'.⁷ Ahmed summarizes the Marxist positions of Shakir and **(p.191)** Engineer that approach Muslim politics in India from a class perspective in the following words:

(a) There is a 'communal' Muslim politics in India. (b) There are several kinds of Muslim elites; practically there is no difference among them. They use the religious ideology of Islam for their vested interests. (c) There are options for Muslims: they should join the 'struggle for emancipation' with other deprived sections of society. (d) Islamic adherence is a personal affair of Muslims. Therefore, it has no role to play in public life (Moin Shakir's position). (e) Islam emerged as a social movement. It can be reinterpreted from a rational modern point of view for, (i) exposing the false Islamic agenda of Muslim elite, and (ii) mobilizing common Muslims for the wider politics of emancipation of the Muslims in India. This 'liberated' form of Islam will eventually follow a secular agenda (Asghar Ali Engineer's position).⁸

The third kind of academic scholarship within the 'secular heterogeneity' perspective is what Ahmed describes as the 'instrumentalist approach' of Paul Brass that seeks to look at 'Muslim politics as an instrument of Muslim elite'.⁹ Ahmed summarizes the 'Brass thesis' on Muslim politics in the following manner:

(a) The Muslim politics becomes defensive and thus converted into a kind of politics of minority rights in post-1950 India. (b) [This has happened because] there was no effective Muslim leadership available to protect and defend the rights of Muslims in this period (ibid.: 273-74). (c) The defensive Muslim politics which has been revolving around the cultural issues such as the protection of Urdu virtually failed to effectively mobilise Muslims for political action in postcolonial India.¹⁰

Finally, the fourth kind of academic scholarship within the 'secular heterogeneity' perspective is what Ahmed describes as the 'modern-liberal explanation of Muslim politics' coming from the noted historian Mushirul Hasan, who seeks to narrate the nature of Muslim politics as a tussle between the 'secular modernists' on the one hand and 'communal Muslim politics' on the other.¹¹ Ahmed draws five inferences from Mushirul Hasan's analysis of Muslim politics:

(p.192) (a) There is only one communal Muslim politics in India, which is anti-secular, because it does not follow the given and prescribed notion of secular politics; it is anti-modern because of its aggressive attitude towards social reforms, and finally, it is anti-Indian because it ignores the

composite Indian culture. (b) Postcolonial Muslim politics is an extension of colonial Muslim politics. There is no difference among forms, contents and mobilisation patterns of these two well-defined political projects. (c) The Partition and the demolition of Babri Mosque as events are comparable; the retreat of the colonial state in the late 1940s and the postcolonial state in 1990s are very similar, and therefore, the aggressive Hindutva politics and the politics of Muslim organisations of the 1980s and 1990s can be compared with the Muslim separatism of the 1940s. (d) Actual Muslim politics can be contrasted with the contribution of secular Muslim institutions and secular Muslim literature. In this sense, Muslim intellectuals, particularly, the secular modernist intellectuals, can be legitimately compared with communal Muslim politicians. (e) The secular project of liberal modernists is based on moral and non-political progressive considerations.¹²

However, Ahmed finds the existing approaches to understanding the postcolonial Muslim political experiences as 'essentialist' and 'incapable' of adequately explaining the relation between Muslim elites and Muslim commons and thus favour to 're-examine the multiplicity of Muslim politics at various levels and its actual functioning'.¹³

In contrast to the *academic discourse* on Muslim politics in postcolonial India, I shall try to delineate the broad contours of prominent political articulations in the Muslim community in a neoliberal India. In doing so, I seek to locate the conditions of possibility for a political space of a progressive Muslim politics that could articulate the democratic demands of Muslim minorities in India by foregrounding the issues of deprivation and exclusion of vast sections of the Indian Muslims from significant walks of life. Post-Independence India, dominated by the Congress (until the mid-90s), failed to recognize the needs of the Muslim community. Its agenda for secularism, which is equally important for addressing the Muslim question, has overshadowed the other issues that have been the cause of worry for Muslims. The needs of education, jobs, and inclusion in various developmental schemes **(p.193)** have been kept aside, as if protection against communal riots is all that Indian Muslims required. However, if we go through the records, both formal and informal, a large number of riots had taken place during the Congress regime as well. That party's level of dedication in providing justice to Muslims is being questioned vis-à-vis the non-implementation of the findings of Sri Krishna Commission Report. In fact, the compromise of the Congress with the 'soft Hindutva' approach in specific instances has given legitimate grounds to the BJP to spread communal canards against the helpless minority.¹⁴ Consequently, the commitment of the Indian political system to build an inclusive, plural, and secular society has proved nothing but a farce.

Major Strands of Articulations among Indian Muslims

From the 1920s to the 1970s in general and during the middle decades of the twentieth century in particular, a significant part of the Muslim world was governed by progressive and secular forces. The Western trends of progressive-secular discourses within the wider totality of Kemalism, which has its genealogy in the secular-nationalist Turkey of the 1920s, were a dominant political discourse in many parts of the Muslim world until this was challenged by the rise of Islamism.¹⁵ In contrast, in India, the progressive-secular discourses were never dominant among Indian Muslims before Partition, barring few exceptions such as a small section of Muslims associated with the formative stages of the Communist Party of India and cultural fronts such as Progressive Writer's Movement and Indian People's Theatre Association during pre-Independence period.¹⁶ However, it should be remembered that although Indian Muslims never had a *dominant* progressive political **(p.194)** articulation within the community throughout post-colonial India's political history, Indian Muslims have always favoured secular political formations while distancing themselves from the communal political forces of both majoritarian and minority varieties. But lately, the limits of secularism in the Indian context seem to be getting exposed and we can comprehend its weaknesses in ensuring socio-economic and political justice for Muslims. The occurrence of communal riots with Muslims as the most affected victims and then the denial of justice to them as the political system fails to punish the riot criminals are political realities in India.

The problem of communalism is appended with aggressive neoliberalism, which worsens the socio-economic conditions of an overwhelming majority of Indian Muslims by affecting their daily livelihoods. As a result of such complicated political circumstances, where a vast majority of Indian Muslims are situated only as alienated victims of the political system, the *presence* of an Islamist political articulation as an assertive political choice can be noticed among a section of Muslims in India. Protests against George W. Bush's visit to India in 2006 and the reaction to Saddam Hussein's execution in early 2007 among Indian Muslims,¹⁷ with core mobilizations from Muslim groups using political appeals coloured by the rhetorical language of Islamic symbolism, are only glimpses of an Islamic political articulation among Indian Muslims. Such Islamic political articulation might take an organized form in the future if the grievances of communal discrimination and democratic demands of the community are not adequately and regularly addressed by the political system in India. It should be borne in mind that a significant section of Indian Muslims identify with the position of what Akeel Bilgrami has termed 'moderate Muslims'.¹⁸ They have a soft corner for the appeal of Islamic political articulations, thus creating the possibility of Islamism as an *available* political discourse among Indian Muslims. This Islamist political discourse might dominate future **(p.195)** political articulations among Indian Muslims in the absence of a credible progressive

political leadership within the Muslim minorities if the existing neoliberal status quo is unable to fulfil several democratic demands of the community.

In a neoliberal policy regime, we can note three strands of political leadership among Indian Muslims corroborated with three distinct politico-ideological articulations within the community. *The first group is formed by those who make up token representation of Muslim leadership in big national political parties such as the Congress, the BJP, and those regional parties that run political affairs with an agenda of neoliberal consensus.* In most cases, this political leadership among Muslims is from secular political parties rather than the BJP although that party too has some minority faces, including those who were members of Parliament and even ministers in the BJP-led NDA governments. Political leadership emerging out of such a collaborationist group under neoliberalism is the representative of power bloc, and its political articulation can be called *power bloc articulation*, serving the interests of the neoliberal status quo. This is the dominant political leadership both within and outside the Muslim community. Apart from being part of the dominant political leadership, over the years, Muslims have also voted for secular political parties such as the Congress and many regional parties rather than any overtly 'Muslim' political formation. Among the political parties, Muslims have significantly voted for the Congress and other regional parties rather than the BJP.¹⁹ The National Election Studies (NES) of CSDS from the 1996 to 2014 Lok Sabha elections show that the Muslim support behind the Congress has been ranging from 32 per cent to 40 per cent, with the lowest being 32 per cent in 1998 and the highest being 40 per cent in 1999.²⁰ In the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, 38 per cent Muslims voted for the Congress while only 8 per cent voted for the BJP.²¹

(p.196) *The second group has an agenda of 'Muslim particularism' with only community-specific demands.* The politics of Muslim particularism in India is carried out via democratic means such as participating in elections, agitations, demonstrations, rallies, protest meetings, and so on. This group comprises some political formations which often act as pressure groups with core conservative Islamic agenda. Historically, the politics of *Muslim particularism* has been relatively more vocal in articulating sectarian interests for its constituency on identity and emotive issues than in raising the fundamental issues of receiving education and employment from the state. It was only after the official publication of the Sachar Committee Report in late 2006 that some sections of the Muslim pressure groups and political parties tried articulating the demands of education and employment for Indian Muslims. Otherwise, *politics of Muslim particularism* in the recent past has visibly been organized around censorship debates on banning the texts of controversial writers on the grounds of religious blasphemy, or sticking to the demand for applying Shariah law in cases of denying alimony to divorced women such as in the Shah Bano case, or the status of minority institutions, or opposing the issue of legalizing homosexuality.

The small section of Indian Muslims identified with politics of Muslim particularism is currently considered a part of fringe elements. But this section has the potential of making an impact on political discourses with their sensationalism and anti-establishment rhetoric, which may find its niche audience among a section of the Muslim community; this might be possible when each terrorist attack by Muslim radicals is corresponded with diabolical right-wing Hindutva assertions raising alarm over 'Islamic terrorism', vilifying and targeting the entire Muslim community as 'anti-national'. Vast sections of Indian Muslims feel alienated by the overwhelming suspicion towards them as potential terrorists. On the other hand, the political strategy of terrorism, which is mostly backed and funded by outside agencies such as the Islamist extremists based in neighbouring countries, has no concrete demands unlike the *Muslim particularists*, who raise community-specific demands related to various issues of socio-religious and political importance for Indian Muslims through democratic means. Terrorists often have abstract justifications and represent a politics of revenge and hatred with no clear objective for the upliftment of socio-economic conditions or betterment (p.197) of livelihood prospects for Indian Muslims. Since the *politics of Muslim particularism* is often enmeshed with theological discourses, it may be termed as the *theo-political articulations* of Indian Muslims.

One can further call the politics of Muslim particularism anti-hegemonic and not counter-hegemonic to neoliberal consensus, since I would argue that anti-hegemonic politics only articulate a politics of resistance, opposition, challenge, and critique to an existing hegemonic order while counter-hegemonic politics represents a vision with a politics of alternative and transformation. The politics of particularism is a marginal political discourse in India in general and among Indian Muslims in particular. This politics of Muslim particularism often celebrates the *excluded* nature of its Muslim constituents while critiquing the power bloc. It can be best described as a *politics of exclusion* that wants to *include* itself in the power bloc by attacking it from the outside without having an agenda of social transformation. This kind of politics, thus, tries to negotiate with the politics of the power bloc. It seeks to be a part of the power bloc and is happy with some cosmetic changes in the political system without fundamentally terminating the exploitative and oppressive nature of neoliberal capitalism. This politico-ideological position may be termed *politics of altered status quo* (representing a mirror image of status quo) that vacillates between collaboration with and opposition to the power bloc. A politics of 'pure particularism is self-defeating'²² since it cannot voice other particularist demands and, therefore, is unable to articulate a universalist political project of emancipation.

Thus, ideologically, the Marxist concept of social revolution and its universalist political project of transcending the current phase of (neoliberal) capitalism with its normative vision of a *post-capitalist order* would be missing in such a political project of particularism. On the other hand, sections among the *Muslim*

particularists can also be identified with Islamism, which has an appeal for some conservative constituencies among Indian Muslims with its rhetoric for justice and equality. This is precisely because of a lack of progressive political articulation both inside and outside the Muslim community, which **(p.198)** could have alienated a section of Muslims from Islamist politics while providing an alternative political articulation. Muslims in India have no other way but to fight like other oppressed people, but since they *lack* a progressive political articulation, a theo-political articulation serves that purpose in terms of generating a discourse of anti-establishment protest. The *available* political language provided by Islamist ideology prominently expressed by groups such as Jamaat-e-Islami Hind against neoliberalism, imperialism, and communalism has been adopted by a *section* of Muslims as a tool of protest. Mainstream Islamists in India also operate through the organization of sponsored reading rooms and libraries that only carry a select number of approved books, mostly written by the founder of Islamist parties such as Sayyid Abul Ala Maududi of Jamaat-e-Islami. Women membership is very low in India's mainstream Islamist parties such as Jamaat-e-Islami. Among its organizational wings, the most important is the student wing, Students' Islamic Organisation (SIO) in India. The Student's Islamic Movement of India (SIMI), which parted ways with SIO in the mid-1980s, is now a banned organization.²³ Much of the political strength of mainstream Islamists, especially its ability to mobilize the masses to confront the government, depends on the student and youth wings such as the Solidarity Youth Organisation, the youth front of Jamaat-e-Islami Hind in Kerala.²⁴

Third, there are possibilities of constructing *progressive political articulations* among Indian Muslims. The fact that Indian Muslims by and large do not own the major means of production, besides being persecuted by majoritarian communalism while facing many disadvantages, makes the community a natural ally of the left. However, merely such objective conditions do not necessarily ensure political mobilization of the Muslim minorities backing the left-wing project. The politics of the left, which is also *inclusive* of the livelihood issues of Indian Muslims, is currently weak in India. That is to say, a left-wing political agenda that also incorporates the Muslim community's democratic demands which are of socio-economic and political nature besides its core commitments of anti-imperialism, anti-communalism, and socialist ideals **(p.199)** is currently not prominent enough in India. Historically, the left-wing political articulation among Indian Muslims and *serious engagement* with Muslim issues within the left have been missing in the post-colonial political discourses in India. In other words, the left within the Muslim community and the Muslim question within the Left are marginalized political discourses.

The progressive political discourses have to be constructed by secular-democratic, liberal, and progressive sections among Indian Muslims on the one hand and initiatives of left-wing politics on the other in trying to address various problems of Muslim minorities. The Indian left can only possibly construct a

universalist political project by rallying other marginalized groups such as Dalits, Adivasis, women, and Muslims besides the core support base of the left—workers and peasants. The dual and combined effort of progressive Muslims and the left in articulating progressive democratic demands and placing them before the political system is thus a necessary political task in contemporary India. Today, we can notice a crisis of progressive political leadership among Muslims in India, which could have articulated the secular-democratic demands of the community besides making a broader popular appeal of changing the neoliberal status quo. The liberal-secular Muslims have been silent regarding consistent intervention in politics in general. There are hardly any such public voices talking about a progressive politics that would organize Muslims around socio-economic issues against the neoliberal power bloc or at least that would try to address the socio-economic concerns of the community. If the democratic demands of a population lose its material bases, and if the secular politics of the mainstream political parties also do not address the socio-economic and political concerns of Muslim minorities, then the creation of conditions for the growth of an Islamist political articulation can indeed be witnessed among a section of Indian Muslims.

The Politics of Muslim Particularism

The political space of Muslim particularism encompasses a broad spectrum of Muslim parties, social movements among Muslims, and Muslim pressure groups. It includes relatively more significant Muslim political parties in India such as the Indian Union Muslim League (IUML), All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF), All India **(p.200)** Majlis-e-Ittehad-ul Muslimeen (AIMIM), Popular Front of India (PFI), Welfare Party of India (WPI), and the Social Democratic Party of India (SDPI); the Muslim reform organizations such as Pasmanda Muslim Mahaz (Marginalized Muslim Front), principal faith-based Islamic organizations such as Tablighi Jamaat, major Muslim pressure groups such as Jamiat-Ulema-Hind, All Indian Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB), All India Muslim Majlis-e-Mushawarat (AIMM), and major Islamist organizations such as Jamaat-e-Islami.

In the post-colonial situation, Indian Muslims lack a progressive political leadership. If such a leadership had existed, it could have addressed the class concerns of the community, namely the issues of socio-economic backwardness, inequality, and employment. The majority of Muslim political leadership since Independence has largely ignored the class aspects of the minority community, while on the other hand, a fragmented Islamist and communalist leadership only celebrated Muslim marginality without an agenda of social transformation. These groups form a broad spectrum with *a programme of Muslim particularism with only community-specific demands* and specific narrow political interests for its constituency. Prominent journals such as *Milli Gazette* and *Islamic Voice* articulate such Muslim discourses and communitarian demands of Indian Muslims. However, it needs to be clarified that Indian Muslims in the post-

Independence period have always sided with the secular political force by isolating the communalists and the religious sectarians of both Muslim and Hindu variety.²⁵ For the lack of progressive articulation among Muslims and the absence of a secular approach in dealing the Muslim question with particular reference to the socio-economic backwardness of Indian Muslims, the popular media is also partly responsible as we have seen in Chapter 2.

On the charges of ‘blasphemy’ and ‘insult to the Prophet’, Islamist political mobilizations took place against the author Salman Rushdie in 1988 after the publication of his book *The Satanic Verses*.²⁶ The book was banned in India before it could reach its intended readers. Partha **(p.201)** Chatterjee then remarked that the ban was ‘not part of a planned authoritarian assault’ but a ‘sign of extreme insecurity, when rulers appeal to realism and practicality to cover up their weakness’.²⁷ Also, in January 2012, several Muslim groups openly threatened ‘violent protests’ if Rushdie was allowed to enter India and participate in the Jaipur Literature Festival.²⁸ The issue of Rushdie’s ‘crime’ of ‘offending Muslim sentiments’ was raised by Muslim groups and the vice chancellor of the prominent Islamic seminary Darul Uloom (Deoband) in the wake of the election campaign for assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh, where Muslims are a sizeable minority.²⁹ Before the start of the Jaipur Literature Festival, Deoband’s vice-chancellor wrote to the union government, insisting that Rushdie be barred from entering India and that he should not be issued a visa—a surprising demand as Rushdie had visited the country five times since the eruption of the controversy over *The Satanic Verses*, including participating in the inaugural edition of the Jaipur Literature Festival in 2007.³⁰ This was an apparently an election-motivated issue, since Rushdie, a person of Indian origin (PIO), does not need a visa and can visit the country whenever he wishes.³¹ Further, in 2013, anticipating Rushdie’s arrival in Kolkata (arguably a cosmopolitan city with a rich legacy of showing dissent) to promote Deepa Mehta’s film *Midnight’s Children* (based on his Booker-winning novel) at the Kolkata book fair, around a hundred people from various Muslim groups gathered at the city airport to protest against the author’s arrival.³² Finally, Rushdie’s visit was cancelled due to security **(p.202)** reasons.³³ In my previous work, I have shown how there have been Islamist mobilizations against both Rushdie and Taslima Nasrin and the probable reasons for such mobilizations.³⁴

The Islamists seek to protest against anyone whose opinions might threaten the foundations of religious belief in the name of ‘hurting religious sentiments’.³⁵ Just like the politics of moral policing, vehement opposition by Islamists to atheism and blasphemy are *negative politics*, which is relatively easier to conduct than offering a *positive politics* which provides an *alternative* to the existing socio-economic system or to transcend an existing politico-ideological order. The implications of such negative politics are that it gets noticed quickly. Such negative politics give the Islamist groups more publicity while justifying their acts on grounds of moral prohibitions in Sharia laws, which according to

the Islamists are legally binding on each and every Muslim. Such issues are generally related to few individuals or events, or at best, limited to small groups, making it easy for the Islamists to respond to, even in the Muslim-minority context of India. Moreover, radical transformative initiatives are not easy to implement as they are time bound and need long-term political struggles. A post-colonial state such as India faces immense populist pressures to stand by the side of a visible minority section of the population—who are, however, a significant number in absolute terms—rather than providing security to individual voices of dissent and protecting the right to freedom of expression according to the promise of the nation's constitution.

The state was also unable to control the outbursts of Hindutva fanatics against the artistic freedom of M.F. Hussain, which eventually forced him to live in exile. In such a context of the surrender of modern normative principles by the post-colonial populist democracy to the fanatics, public protests against individual political dissent (in the form **(p.203)** of creative expressions) are organized for very wrong reasons. The state, on the other hand, set up a dangerous precedence by succumbing to the pressures of the religious fanatics in India. This means that nobody in the future can describe a particular sacred text, whether Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Buddhist, Sikh, or otherwise, as a mythology even if it is backed up by scholarly evidence, simply because the 'religious sentiments' of a section of the Indian population would be 'hurt'. This kind of practice would only endanger the future of Indian secularism.

I have already pointed out in Chapter 1 that the left has historically failed to address the question of Muslim identity. Thus, it has to address the specific class-oriented demands of Muslims, which can take forward both left politics and the prospects of socio-economic development among Muslims. This is especially so given the socio-economic and political marginalization and ghettoization of Muslims in West Bengal where the left has been historically a prominent political force during the entire post-colonial period.³⁶ Even in West Bengal, which is known for its communal harmony and progressive politics, retaliatory violence in response to ethnic violence in East Pakistan took the shape of anti-Muslim riots in 1964.³⁷ Since Indian Muslims lack a progressive leadership, it is the task of the left to provide that political leadership in directly addressing the socio-economic issues of Muslims in India. If class agenda is the cornerstone of Marxist politics, then the future of Marxist politics cannot be imagined without addressing the class **(p.204)** aspects of marginalized groups such as Dalits, Adivasis, women, and Muslims.

In the absence of a serious engagement by the progressive forces with the Muslim community, a politics of Muslim particularism can only get strengthened with a narrow communitarian approach that would solely foreground the religious identity of Muslims over the socio-economic backwardness of the community. In the next few sections, I will demonstrate the peculiar articulations

of such *politics of Muslim particularism* in and around one global event, the public hanging of the former Iraqi president Saddam Hussein, and the local responses of a section of Indian Muslims. I shall also compare the reactions of such a global event with another event of discourse formation during the public trial of a Kashmiri academic in India's national capital.

Saddam Hussein's Hanging and Moments of Muslim Politics

Saddam, meaning 'the one who confronts'—one of the most vociferous dissenting voices of resistance against US imperialism throughout the 1990s and early 2000s—was silenced on the second last day of the year 2006. The former Iraqi president became the victim of a flawed trial perpetrated by the US's puppet regime in Iraq, a kind of judicial mockery, which executed him by hanging in front of the world as screened by the Iraqi television at 6.00 a.m. Iraqi time and 8.30 a.m. Indian Standard Time (IST) on 30 December 2006. Led to the gallows, a shackled but ever-confident Saddam Hussein had his one final moment of defiance as he refused to have a hood pulled over his head. A noose was placed around his neck, and a ski-masked guard pulled a lever that suddenly ended his life, bringing to conclusion an important chapter of Iraq's history. An official witness confirmed Saddam's death instantly before mentioning that Saddam 'seemed very calm. He did not tremble'.³⁸ He added that Saddam was reciting the *kalma* (hymn of faith) while holding the Quran. It is interesting to note that by 1991, Saddam had already transformed his overtly secular-nationalist rhetoric of the 1980s to Islamic symbolic expressions with the adding of *Takbir* (the phrase 'Lord Allah is the greatest') to the Iraqi flag and made an effort (p.205) to give an Islamic character to his regime.³⁹ The execution of Saddam just before the new year and Eid celebrations was not insignificant. On such an occasion, the US-backed native Iraqi government may have hoped that protests against this heinous and condemnable act could well be controlled.

The television screening of this barbaric act as a form of spectacle may be a strong message for those who seek to challenge imperialist dominance. But it has its counterproductive significances too, particularly in creating the mental images that would haunt the memories of both Muslims and non-Muslims and might increase their rage and hate against imperialist states in future. In this regard, for arranging and reorganizing our mental make-up based on rigorous theoretical explanations, we must explore the experts' views on the issue of image projection and its consequences. As one authoritative commentator on Wittgenstein points out:

Of course we cannot hope to fix the interpretation of one linguistic sign by appeal to anything else that ends up functioning as a sign that requires interpretation, as ordinary gestures, drawings, and samples invariably do. What we need is something that is not itself a sign standing in need of interpretation of other signs. Perhaps, then, we should look, not outward toward gestures, drawings, and samples that themselves turn out to

function as mere signs which can be variously interpreted, but inward toward our own *thoughts* or *mental images*. Our own thoughts and mental images surely cannot be said to stand in need of interpretation. In fact, more often than not, we cannot interpret our internal thoughts or mental images as we can interpret external signs; we have them, and no question arises or can arise as to what they mean.⁴⁰

Wittgenstein refuses to allow that the question of whether a representation is mental and inner or physical and outer makes any difference at all to the problem he is after.

On the one hand the picture (of whatever kind) that at some time or other comes before his mind; on the other, the application which—in **(p.206)** the course of time—he makes of what he imagines. (And can't it be clearly seen here that it is absolutely inessential for the picture to exist in his imagination rather than as a drawing or model in front of him; or again as something that he himself constructs as a model?)⁴¹

Commentators suggest that there is an excellent reason for Wittgenstein 'to refuse to allow that the fact that a picture exists in the imagination rather than as a drawing or model will solve his problem'.⁴² This is because one needs to distinguish between the 'linguistic signs' and 'mental signs (thoughts)'.⁴³ Here, we must question whether once the image is out of sight, we forget it or not. Whether 'out of sight, out of mind' also holds true for the episode of Saddam's execution or are the pictures of Saddam's execution going to have a deep impact on our mind in the form of memories as a part of both individual and collective mourning?

It was claimed by the special tribunal which condemned Saddam that he was hanged for the 1982 Dujail killings of 148 people belonging to the Shia community. The protests against such a kind of victor's justice in different parts of the world were, however, very lukewarm and not comparable to those against the Iraq war. Instead, there were several reports of Shia celebrations over Saddam's execution. Iran welcomed the execution; IRNA, the official news agency of Islamic Republic of Iran, quoted the then deputy foreign minister Hamid Reza Aseki as saying that the incident was 'victory for all Iraqis'.⁴⁴ Israel, the closest ally of the United States in West Asia, welcomed Saddam's execution while, on behalf of Palestine, Hamas described the hanging as a political assassination violating all norms and laws of the international community. Libya had declared three days of national mourning and said Saddam was a 'war prisoner'.⁴⁵ Russia and some members of the European Union such as Britain and France opposed such capital **(p.207)** punishment, while the Vatican City expressed concerns about violent incidents after the execution.⁴⁶

Before the imperialist attack on Iraq on 20 March 2003, and during the Iraq war, the international community staged massive worldwide protests. Even on every 20 March, at least during 2003–5, there were protests during the Bush–Blair visits at several places. Before the outbreak of the war in Iraq, the Clinton administration of USA ordered bombings in that country. Such attacks were also protested, even if on a smaller scale. However, since Saddam Hussein was captured by the US military on 13 December 2003, the injustice that a former head of an independent sovereign state received from imperialist aggressors and its native Iraqi collaborators had very limited influence on world public opinion. The fate of the former Iraqi president was sealed when he was taken to a prison by the occupying forces of the USA. But it is quite ironical that beyond the routine protests, important though they were, there were no massive demonstrations against the farcical judicial procedures against Saddam. One cannot equate the Iraq war that claimed so many innocent lives with the life of Saddam Hussein, the dictator of an authoritarian regime that had a bloody history of crushing popular movements, butchering the progressive and communist elements in Iraq, and waging a decade-long war against neighbouring Iran with the backing of the USA in the 1980s.

The two stories of US attacks on Iraq and the previous US support to the Saddam regime in the 1970s and 1980s cannot be seen in isolation. We have to look at them as parts of the totality of the grand project of American imperialism. In the twentieth century, the USA has always tried to create disputes and conflicts among third-world nation-states and its people by fanning non-class-oriented antagonistic contradictions on the lines of ethnicity, religion, and regionalism so that an anti-imperialist movement may be derailed. During the Iran–Iraq war, however, Saddam managed to consolidate a significant Shia population in Iraq under the banner of Arab nationalism, where the linguistic and cultural identities of both the Shias and Sunnis of Iraq were made distinguishable from the non-Arab Persian linguistic and cultural identity of Iran, besides repressive state apparatus being used for the **(p.208)** mobilization of war. In the Iran–Iraq war, the USA backed Saddam. Although the latter tactically aligned with the former in the 1980s, one cannot deny Saddam’s anti-imperialist credentials during the two Gulf Wars in 1991 and 2003, and particularly the commendable resistance of the Iraqi state under his leadership despite occasional American bombings, tremendous international sanctions, and global blockades in the inter-war years. Thus, the ideological structures of imperialism are the rehashed version of the old divide and rule strategy and are incredibly racist. So long as a nation-state is a pliant tool of the imperialist forces, it will be helped, no matter how oppressive it is. Once it breaks free from the imperialist bandwagon, it will be crushed.

However, the American onslaught on Iraq was a display of aggressive imperialist power, the kind of oppression and violence that many people cannot ignore due to its inhuman and explicit character marked by immediate destructive

potentialities and the ravages and savagery of war. But the judicial mockery and simultaneous process of silencing world public opinion by demonizing Saddam as a culprit, dictator, criminal, and terrorist through the apparatuses of international media campaign and propaganda can be seen as a form of 'sanctioned violence'⁴⁷ on the part of the imperialist establishment to maintain its **(p.209)** hegemony. Very recently, Iraqi society threw up an interesting debate on whether to save or destroy the monuments that Saddam Hussein had built. The Shia leadership wanted to destroy some of them as they thought that those were a 'ghastly reminder of a terrible era and should be destroyed' as 'Saddam built it for himself' at the end of Iran-Iraq war.⁴⁸ This is how a grand scale of public vilification of Saddam was undertaken by the propaganda machinery of imperialist forces in alliance with a section of the ruling elites of Iraq, where even aesthetics and artistic productions would be targeted since it was built by a so-called alleged dictator.

On the other hand, Saddam's vilification by making a forced connection with Islamic extremism and Osama Bin Laden was another fallacious yet calculated imperialist strategy of targeting a personality who was one of the very few modern and secular voices characterized by a sense of economic nationalism, as evident from Iraq's oil nationalization programme. The modern, secular traditions of Saddam's Baath Socialist Party remain unimpeachable till date in a region affected by the current ascendancy of Islamic militancy. We should not forget that once, in an election manifesto, the Baath Socialist Party pointed out a fundamental contradiction between imperialism of the advanced first-world capitalist countries and the nationalism of Arab and other third-world countries. But we generally forget such positive pasts of a political figure whose image has been tarnished to a great extent by the propagandist agencies of imperialism. Due to such modes of sanctioned **(p.210)** violence through propaganda and vicious campaign against a particular person, we strongly protest against the Iraq war but do not often protest on a similar level against Saddam's execution or lose our public memory. This was the case during Saddam's trial when we could only see feeble public discontent.

It is true that there were some protests against such inhuman execution although to a much lesser degree when compared with the Iraq war. But even those opposing any form of capital punishment did not take up the issue in a big way when the verdict for execution was passed on 5 November 2006. More than one and a half months passed between the pronouncement of the judgment and the execution, but the widespread discontent against such an inhuman punishment was not registered in public discourse. This is precisely how the imperialist propaganda machinery manipulates the psyche of individuals as well as collectives by imposing a sanctioned violence on the people who are opposed to imperialist hegemony so that *differences* and *distinctions* are made between various acts of the imperialists on the one hand, and *discrimination* is produced between myriad responses against imperialist actions on the other side. During

the Iraq war, the intensity and magnitude of protests were surely very high when compared with the low-intensity demonstrations during the trial of Saddam. In this regard, the discrimination is visible due to the projection of two different acts of the imperialists articulated in the public discourse although one may consider these two apparently *disparate* events as similar acts of imperialist violence.

There were protests against the execution of Saddam Hussein across Indian cities by leftist activists and Muslim clerics in New Delhi, Kolkata, and Lucknow.⁴⁹ In those protest marches, anti-American slogans were shouted, straw effigies of Bush were burnt, and in Lucknow, briefly, trains were blocked. Imam Maulana Khalid Rasheed, a cleric at a local mosque in Lucknow, said, 'This was a glaring example of America's dictatorship over the rest of the world', and 'it is ironic that those who claim to be champions of human rights and justice do not practice what **(p.211)** they preach'.⁵⁰ In Kerala, there were protests by parties and organizations irrespective of their political affiliation and people from all walks of life participated in those protest marches. In some places, the national highway was blocked. A strike was also called between 3.00 p.m. and 6.00 p.m. on the day of Saddam's execution along with calls for special prayers on Eid-uz-Zuha, Bakrid. The protests were about the mockery of justice and the inhuman treatment meted out to Saddam in the form of an 'evil deed', which is unparalleled in the history of humanity.⁵¹

In a Friday protest meeting gathering at old Delhi's Daryaganj intersection, the Shahi Imam of Delhi's Jama Masjid, Syed Ahmad Bukhari, condemned the execution of Saddam Hussein and extended moral support to the Muslims in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Palestine who according to him were 'reeling under the atrocities of the United States'. Bukhari blamed some Muslim countries for acting as slaves of the USA. He said that the US administration must understand that spilling the blood of Iraqi Muslims and Saddam would 'bring about a revolution'. He then added:

December 30, 2006 would remain etched in the memory of Muslims as they came to know about the execution even as they were performing Haj. The United Nations had lost its relevance as it did not care about "terrorism" being perpetrated by the US, Britain, and Israel. Saddam was executed only because he dared to challenge US power even as world's developed countries kept quiet.⁵²

Before Bukhari's speech, protestors burnt an effigy of US President George Bush near gate no. 1 of Jama Masjid following the Friday prayers. The demonstrators led by Syed Bukhari were on their way to the US Embassy when they were stopped by the police at the Daryaganj intersection.⁵³

In yet another protest rally on Saddam's execution in Bangalore, the former union minister of India and current president of People's Front, **(p.212)** C.K. Jaffer Sharief, said: 'In the light of the "murky" role of the U.S. in the execution of the former Iraqi president, the United Nations should immediately shift its headquarters from the U.S. to a Third World country.' The same news report suggests that the 'cunning role' played by U.S. President George Bush and U.K. Prime Minister Tony Blair in the 'heinous killing' of Saddam Hussein came under attack by political leaders and some Muslim religious heads in a protest rally organized by People's Front. Addressing a gathering at the Shivajinagar stadium, Mr Sharief said that the execution by a 'kangaroo court' had 'shocked, and stirred the conscience' of those who 'trusted and respected' peace. Furthermore, he told the audience: 'The U.S. and the U.K. had led a war of aggression against Iraq to restore what they called a democracy. But these aggressors had closed their eyes at the thriving dictatorship in the neighbourhood of Iraq. Pakistan is an example.' Tracing the chronology of the events that ultimately resulted in Saddam's execution, Mr Sharief said that 'for the U.S., the quest for weapons of mass destruction was only an excuse to attack Iraq'.⁵⁴ A number of secular political leaders from Karnataka including some current and former ministers emphasized on Saddam's friendly relationship with India. However, the protests were unfortunately marred by violence that rocked some parts of Bangalore.⁵⁵

Saddam Hussein in Indian Local Narrative

In early 2004, an Indian friend of Saddam Hussein, furniture businessman Mukhtiar Singh, wanted to gift the former Iraqi president a throne made with intricately-carved teak and winged with an Iraqi emblem. He said emotionally, 'I'll present this chair to him if I ever meet him. I pray for his well-being every day. The day he was pulled out of his hideaway in Tikrit by US soldiers, I was very upset. I couldn't sleep for days.' Singh recalls a special meeting with Saddam in Iraq: 'I was just a carpenter, but I was treated like a king. Five Mercs accompanied me to one of the palaces. I had a special room and coffee was served in **(p.213)** golden cups. I was then taken to meet Saddam.... The president shook hands and repeatedly hugged me. We spoke of many things—Kashmir, India-Iraq relations, Sikh traditions.' According to the news report,

The meeting, scheduled for 15 minutes, went on for an hour. Singh presented a 250-kg carved, wooden lion to the Lion of Baghdad. At the end of it, he asked Singh, 'What can I do for you?' Singh replied he wanted the Baba Nanak Maqam gurdwara in Baghdad to be restored. The gurdwara, destroyed during Saddam's time, was where Guru Nanak had stayed for four months during a trip to Mecca-Medina. 'Saddam immediately ordered the needful to be done.' Singh was given gifts and asked to take charge of a huge furniture factory in Baghdad. He refused but agreed to train Iraqis. Showing paper cuttings, he said, 'My photos came out in the national dailies and TV. Iraqi ministers would call, asking what they could do for

me.’ He went back to Baghdad later and selected 20 students from Saddam’s factory to work with him in Delhi. He met Saddam a second time, some five years back in Tikrit, on his birthday. It was quite a bash, with cultural shows and much feasting. The good times didn’t last though. With sanctions, his Iraqi links also dried up. Today, Singh sees Saddam as a leader who’s been wronged. Dictator? ‘That’s an image painted by the western media. He’s so lovable and humble. I am still ready to do anything for Saddam,’ he said.⁵⁶

One day in the year 2006, I was coming back with a friend to Jawaharlal Nehru University after having dinner at a restaurant in Nizamuddin (a Muslim concentrated area in New Delhi) in an auto-rickshaw. During the journey, we had a good conversation with the driver of the auto-rickshaw on some issues. I asked his name. He replied, ‘Saddam Hussain.’ I asked, ‘What is your age?’ He said, ‘Forty.’ Then I told him, ‘Why did your parents choose this name?’ knowing fully well that 40 years ago, Saddam Hussain was not as famous and popular and people did not know much about him. My other assumption was that common poor Muslims often followed the names of famous personalities such as Muslim film stars, sports personalities, musicians, and international political figures for the iconic identification or in search of iconoclasm. But my assumption was wrong. He **(p.214)** said that his original name was Amjad Ali. We were surprised. Seeing our confusion he clarified his position by narrating a brief story. He said that during the American war in Iraq in 1990, a white man on the streets of Nizamuddin made a few lewd comments to a burqa-clad woman using abusive language, which somehow he managed to partly understand, as the white man was speaking in English. The incident took place right in front of him. He promptly approached the English-speaking white man and gently told him that he should not utter such derogatory remarks anymore. In response, the white man abused him as well. At this point, the auto-rickshaw driver became furious and beat him up very badly. The driver was soon locked up in the local police station after the white man’s complaint. But the local people of Nizamuddin turned up at the police station and thereafter, partly due to local public pressure and partly due to the deposit money arranged by the locals, the driver got out on bail, and the problem was amicably settled. It is after this incident that he was given the name Saddam Hussain by the local people.⁵⁷

As is seen from this case, Saddam is not only a hero in Muslim localities but a symbol of Muslim resistance against the West. Further, the white man becomes the symbol of Western power, and the auto-rickshaw driver becomes a symbol of Muslim strength, saving the *izzat* (honour) of the community by warning the white man not to use derogatory remarks against a Muslim woman. Later on, I tried to analyse the incident a little more by complementing it with my initial take on this issue. In my opinion, apart from becoming a symbol of Muslim voice against Western injustice, there was also an element of male chivalry here by taking an initiative of saving a woman from a kind of racist eve-teasing. Here,

the white man was a metaphor of the Western race and a metonym of American power as the auto-rickshaw driver did not know about his nationality. In fact, the locals also did not have any idea about the nationality of the white man. So, why did the locals name Amjad Ali as Saddam Hussain? Is it because Amjad successfully beat up the white man? Is it because there is anger among a significant section of Indian Muslims against the West in general and America in particular? Does this rage against America and its Western allies have something to do with their foreign policies reflected in the form of **(p.215)** imperialist wars against Iraq, Afghanistan, Palestine, and others? Or did the successful beating up of the white man signify a local victory of Muslims against American power albeit in a very symbolic and limited sense? Can we locate this incident as a function of increasing rage of the Muslim local against the American empire where certain Muslim states are targeted, victimized, and demolished? Can we call this name-giving a celebration of the *revenge* taken by the auto-rickshaw driver at the local level on the part of the Muslim world against the dominant and victorious American imperialism? It is here that the imagination of a homogenous ummah (community of believers) becomes traceable despite the fact that the international Muslim ummah is fragmented on various issues vis-à-vis American imperialism. In fact, the American-Israeli wars against Iraq, Afghanistan, Palestine, Lebanon, and the war threat to Iran is supported by many Muslim countries who are loyal allies of the USA including Saudi Arabia. This is the crucial contradiction and paradox of the so-called Muslim ummah, where both a sense of belonging and yet non-belonging co-exist simultaneously. One should ask a very pertinent question about why a significant section of Muslims all over the world are so bothered about what is happening in other Muslim states or with Muslims in various parts of the world. Such a grand scale of community consciousness on a transnational space is not easily found in other forms of associations such as different religious, ethnic, and trade unions, communist parties, and so on, despite the fact that some of them very actively follow and try to champion the ideals of internationalism.

The Language of Muslim Politics: Symbolic Appeal to the *Ummah*

Eickelman and Piscatori point out that language far from being neutral 'may be used to affirm or reaffirm hierarchies of power'.⁵⁸ They further argue that 'it would be misleading to conclude that the political language of Islam is simply composed of terms used in a predictable manner or to see these terms as possessing uniform relevance to political and social action. Rather, Islamic political language requires a **(p.216)** broader conceptualisation'.⁵⁹ Ali Shari'ati (1933–1977) captures this point very aptly:

The language of religion, and particularly the language of Semitic religions, in whose prophets we believe, is a symbolical language. By this we mean a language which expresses meaning through images and symbols—the most excellent and exalted of all languages that men have ever evolved.... A simple and straightforward language, one deprived of all

symbol and image, may be easier for purposes of instruction, but it has no permanence.⁶⁰

Scholars argue that 'the mediators of the language of Muslim politics include traditional, *madrassa*-educated religious intellectuals and the increasingly prominent "new" religious intellectuals who have emerged from modern state or secular schooling, as is the case for most Muslim activists, or who have had experience with both styles of education'.⁶¹ In this regard, the narrative examples used earlier in local Indian responses to imperialist violence on a former Iraqi president exemplifies the mixing of various educational styles. Muslim politics becomes incomprehensible if the symbolism and shared assumptions of Muslims are disregarded.

Let me discuss some of these elements of Muslim politics and its peculiar mode of political articulation characterized by the distinct forms of several signifiers. An interesting vantage point to start the debate on the appeal of ummah in the political articulation of Muslim politics is particularly regarding political mobilization. That is to say how the symbolic appeal of the ummah becomes significant in political mobilization of Muslims throughout the globe.

Like the Muslim community in India, the ummah is also fragmented and heterogeneous, concerning not only sects such as Sunnis and Shias but also differences along regional, ethnic, and linguistic lines. But despite its heterogeneity, the category of ummah has an appeal for a large section of Muslims throughout the globe. The ummah is expressed as an identification of Muslims with a global Muslim identity. **(p.217)** Therefore, the concept of ummah has to be properly explored because the imagination of a significant number of Muslims in India gets affected by whatever happened and is happening in various parts of the Muslim world in an age of imperialism and terrorism, and in a mediatized and globalized world. This transnational sense of belonging among Muslims is also important, which many scholars overlook in studying the Muslims of India. However, this is not to suggest that one should support an altogether Hindu right-wing suspicion towards Muslim minorities in India, that since religious identity and a sense of belongingness towards the transnational idea of ummah is vital for a large section of Muslims, so all Muslims are anti-national or their patriotism is questionable. There is no denying the fact that, the allegiance of Muslims in India towards the secular constitution is unimpeachable to date.

The idea of ummah is expressed through identification with a singular and universalist global Muslim identity. However, within Islamic discourses, there are compelling concepts such as *mulk* (country) and *watan* (home). Such concepts in Islamic discourses invoke an idea of belonging that ranges from the territorial notion of the nation-state to the transnational and internationalist appeal of the ummah. Conceptually, the seventh-century Islamic concept of the

ummah is an antinomy to the seventeenth-century Westphalian system of the nation-state. The period of decolonization and the emergence of newly formed Muslim majority nation-states following the abolition of the Caliphate in the early 1920s indeed questioned the universality of the ummah. The internationalist idea of the ummah is based on the logic of fraternity (Muslim brethren). Similarly, the idea of the nation is also based on the logic of fraternity. In this respect, the question of where a Muslim belongs in a post-Khilafat and post-Westphalian system of nation-states is a significant one.

Islamists believe in the universalist concept of ummah, which is conceptually a supranational or transnational union. The Islamist call for the unity of the ummah is based on the belief that Muslims throughout the world should have a certain sense of solidarity that cut across the borders of the nation-state. In this respect, Islamists have justifications for opposing the concept of the nation-state. After the abolition of the Caliphate in 1924 by Kemalist policies, there **(p. 218)** has been little in the way of symbolic global theo-political authority among Muslims. Therefore, in a post-colonial and post-Khilafat world, the universalist idea of the Muslim ummah encounters the particularist entity of new and emerging nation-states. At the same time, the compelling concepts of 'mulk' and 'watan' in the Muslim discourses signify patriotism and obedience to one's own country. In the specific context of Indian Muslims, the community is indeed distinct from the Muslims of the Arab and the Persian world because of the particular dynamics of caste structures, theological schools, and local ritualistic practices. Moreover, the lived experiences of Indian Muslims in an era of neoliberalism has been that of continuous marginalization and deprivation as we have seen in earlier chapters, which makes a case for considering Muslims as a subaltern group such as that of the Dalits, Adivasis, and women.

The belief in the universal identity of Muslims as primarily a religious or Islamic one is an outcome of the Islamic faith in the homogenous concept of the ummah. According to the Islamists, the ummah cannot be fragmented along caste, kinship, ethnic, or linguistic lines. Thus, Islamists propose the very unity and solidarity of Muslims all over the world around the commonality of Islamic identity of the ummah. There can be income differentials among Muslims, that is to say there can be rich and poor among the ummah, but those differences according to Islamists are legitimized by the Quran as natural. Islamists believe that absolute equality is impossible, but if the Islamic instructions of Quran and Sunnah (sayings and practices of Prophet as recorded in Hadith) are correctly followed in socio-economic matters, then inequalities can certainly be minimized. Islamists always try to claim that Islam is a mass ideology instead of a class one. For a mass ideology, it constructs the concept of 'ummah' where persons hailing from various class backgrounds, ethnicity, nationality, linguistic identities, and gender differentials can become a part of a whole. In political theory, we call this an 'empty signifier' around which different particularities would organize themselves to claim a common universality or universal identity.

In secular politics, we have the concept of 'people' playing the role of such an empty signifier. As an effective tool of political mobilization, the concept of ummah as a homogenous universal concept is crucial for Islamist politics. In Laclau's terms we can argue that in Islamist politics, **(p.219)** the ummah acts as an 'empty signifier'.⁶² In India, the homogeneity of ummah is constructed by Islamists by negating caste and linguistic differences because, in this country, Muslims are more differentiated along caste and linguistic lines than class distinctions.

Saddam and Geelani: Two Cases of Public Trials

In the last section, I have considered some factual statements and expert opinion on the judicial exercises against Saddam Hussein conducted via the sanctioned violence of dominant power structures and how the production of the ummah as an 'empty signifier' in shaping an Islamist political articulation becomes possible in such a situation. Now, I will analyse the case of a Kashmiri academic in the light of a public trial as evident from the mounting curiosity in the media, and then a corresponding Muslim response to such an event in India.

In the name of war against global terrorism, the everyday demonization of Muslims and several Muslim nation-states is a reality. In India also, we find a similar kind of stereotyping and demonization of ordinary Muslim citizens that is continuously widening the chasm between Hindus and Muslims. We see this stereotyping and witch-hunting most famously in the recent past in the case of Sayed Abdul Rahman Geelani, the Delhi University lecturer with a Kashmiri Muslim identity, who was considered a 'terrorist'.⁶³

Before Geelani was acquitted, those demanding his release were experts and activists whose commitment to progressive democratic **(p.220)** movements and human rights are unimpeachable as is their dedication and faith in the cherished principles of justice and integrity of the Indian constitution. By arguing in favour of Geelani, they did not become less patriotic than many self-claiming patriots. In the entire process, Geelani's image was tarnished as a section of media had already concluded that he was a terrorist and tagged that label on him during one of India's most debated legal trials. Thanks to the massive media hype, the case was soon converted into a public trial.

The vilifications and suspicions cast on Indian Muslims as suspected terrorists after every terrorist attack represent the daily dose of prejudices that ordinary Muslims get, as if terrorist activities are not conducted by North-Eastern militants, Khalistanis, and by the Tamil radical groups such as the LTTE, or even the Maoists. In fact, two of India's prime ministers were killed by non-Muslim terrorist outfits: Indira Gandhi was assassinated by the Khalistanis in 1984, and Rajiv Gandhi was assassinated in 1991 by the LTTE. Also, there are the perilous issues of allegations against selective targeting of the ordinary Kashmiris and north-eastern people by the armed forces and the question of encounter killings.

A range of Indian citizens—intellectuals, teachers, writers, lawyers, political activists, and ordinary people—have raised their voice against such stereotyping of Indian Muslims. The conscience- and security-related problems of society and the majority of democratic peace-loving people can be only satisfied if there is no witch-hunting or scapegoats, and those guilty of terrorist activities and genocide are appropriately identified and punished.

If we compare the popular protests against the imperialist execution of Saddam Hussein with that of the false framing of Geelani then we notice that Indian Muslims have so far reacted to these two cases very differently. In the case of Saddam, we have seen spontaneous popular protests by various secular-democratic-progressive people including a large number of Muslims. But in the case of Geelani, apart from the Kashmir Valley and a handful of informed citizens and activists who have a reputation for making serious interventions on several issues related to human rights violations—concerned citizen's rights groups, civil liberties groups, some NGOs, and a section of left-democratic and progressive forces—not many people have protested.

The Geelani case got extensive media coverage for its sensational value albeit with negative connotations and vilifications of Geelani **(p.221)** from a section of the Indian media. In fact, those who have closely observed the role of the media on the issue of the Parliament attack case have argued that sections of the media constructed an identity of a 'Kashmiri Terrorist'.⁶⁴ Barring in Kashmir, there were hardly any significant protests on the Geelani issue from the Muslim localities in most parts of the country like it had happened on the subject of Saddam Hussein. This is not only a function of the vast disparity of stature between the Iraqi—an international hero for a significant section of the Muslim world, an ex-president of a sovereign nation-state—and a much lesser known commoner such as Geelani, but it has also to do with various other reasons. The public spectacle of Saddam's hanging in the form of a visual image on television screens, the superior position of Saddam as a symbol of anti-imperialist resistance, and the more sympathetic Indian media coverage on the Saddam issue might be possible reasons for the varied nature of protests as far as the Muslim masses are concerned; the Geelani case lacked all those aspects that Saddam's issue did manage to register in the public domain. So, there is a hierarchy even among the various moments of sanctioned violence that produce discrimination among resistant people, where in one instance, we protest and in another, our protests become subdued or we simply do not respond to the injustice. Thus, there are structured layers of sanctioned violence that distinguish two incidents of victor's justice and capital punishment and are treated differently. Previously, we saw a sanctioned violence that incited us to react very differently to the Iraq war and Saddam's capital punishment. But, we can also locate different scale of protests on the issue of Saddam's imperialist execution and the stereotypical image vilifications of Geelani by a peculiarly biased language of the dominant mainstream media that is continuously

constructing and reproducing the image of a so-called 'anti-national Muslim terrorist'.

Here, the dominant discourses always try to displace, vilify, and marginalize the non-dominant or minority discourses. While we are not just programmed or driven by instinct, our thoughts and actions are influenced, regulated, and, to some extent, controlled by dominant **(p.222)** discourses. So, we protest against a foreign enemy such as US imperialist onslaught, but we are a little sceptical when it comes to challenging the right-wing stereotype of the 'Muslim terrorist' or the 'Kashmiri terrorist'.

However, besides the structured layers of sanctioned violence, the problematics of governing the population also demand serious attention in the analysis of the whole episode that has been discussed so far. As Foucault rightly points out, 'We need to see things not in terms of the replacement of a society of sovereignty by a disciplinary society and the subsequent replacement of a disciplinary society by a society of government; in reality one has a triangle, sovereignty-discipline-government, which has as its primary target the population and as its essential mechanism the apparatuses of security.'⁶⁵ In this respect, we notice that the dominant public discourse shaped by mainstream media in both cases of Saddam and Geelani is *disciplining* the population—while at the end of the day, underlying the mechanisms of *disciplining* the people, a subtle form of punishment can also be located in terms of earning the consent of the population for its submission to the hegemony of the dominant power structures such as imperialist propaganda and the right-wing political discourses of communal stereotyping in India. Here, Foucault again becomes relevant as he points out that

the population now represents more the end of government than the power of the sovereign; the population is the subject of needs, of aspirations, but it is also the object in the hands of the government, aware, *vis-à-vis* the government, of what it wants, but ignorant of what is being done to it. Interest at the level of the consciousness of each individual who goes to make up the population, and interest considered as the interest of the population regardless of what the particular interests and aspirations may be of the individuals who compose it, this is the new target and the fundamental instrument of the government of population: the birth of a new art, or at any rate of a range of absolutely new tactics and techniques.⁶⁶

As we can notice in the context of these two cases of Saddam and Geelani, a complex dynamics is being ushered in where the *aspirations* **(p.223)** of a particular section of the population (the power bloc) would be fulfilled and the vast majority of the population will be given assurance or taken into confidence with 'consent' that 'they are actually "people's enemies" and their execution, the

execution of “terrorists” will be *great* for the “progress, growth and development” of the nation-state’. Here, the people are aware of the issues of Saddam and Geelani, aware may be as a result of a distorted truth, perhaps through a subversion of the facts after continuous character assassination with the labels of ‘anti-national’, ‘criminal’, ‘terrorist’, ‘murderer’, and so on. But they are ignorant about the kind of effects that the hegemonic model of media propaganda has on their lives whereby people chose to be silent or are conditioned to be silent. In the light of the above narratives, what are the grounds for a progressive political articulation in India to deal with the Muslim question?

Identity and Difference: Queries for Indian Progressive Politics

The queries and tasks before any progressive politics dealing with the Muslim question in India are twofold. First, any progressive politics has to theoretically deal with the Muslim question not only from a class perspective but also has to make a connection between class and Muslim identity. Second, it has to grapple with the specifics of pragmatic politics in mobilizing Muslim minorities behind a cluster of democratic demands that are both particular in nature, having traction for a specific identity group such as Muslims, Dalits, Adivasis, and so on, as well as to articulate a more general and universalist agenda that can rally the Indian people at large. Let us deal with these twin challenges in the realm of theoretical articulation.

Arguably, there is wide agreement among progressive political forces that the left-wing political project in contemporary India is in crisis. Issues such as caste, minorities, gender, and environment have emerged to inform and shape the political and policy-making discourses in the country. Accepting and acknowledging such relevant issues by the left requires a reformulation of the older versions of the socialist ideal. In this respect, the left needs to extend and deepen the democratic project. However, there are serious disagreements on the theoretical and political strategies that the left needs to adopt to carry out such a task. **(p.224)** Some prefer to prioritize class struggles over any other form of non-class struggles. On the other hand, some are more interested in focusing on identity-based non-class struggles. Based on the terminology of political philosophy, we can summarize that although both are concerned with an emancipatory project for particular constituencies such as the workers (class) or marginalized identity groups (Dalits, Adivasis, Muslims, women, and so on), the focus on class struggles is anchored around the ideas of *distributive justice* and *equality*. Those who argue for the struggles of marginalized groups are more concerned with *social justice* and *identity*. In such cases, as Nancy Fraser argues, we encounter ‘either/or choice: redistribution or recognition? Class politics or identity politics? Multiculturalism or social democracy?’⁶⁷ However, such decoupling of cultural politics from social politics, of the politics of difference from the politics of equality, of the philosophical idea of egalitarian distribution from the politics of recognition is a ‘false antithesis’. As Fraser

correctly argues, redistribution and recognition converge together despite their divergent philosophical provenances.⁶⁸ The argument for social justice and identity not only asks for recognition of various democratic demands of marginalized groups but also calls for equal opportunity. In this respect, the idea of equality is expressed in the social justice discourse regarding equal recognition, equal opportunity, and equal treatment. Thus, the apparent point of departure between the two schools of justice and the evident distinction between *equality* on the one hand and *diversity* and *difference* on the other is not a fundamental distinction. The challenge of the left, or for that matter any progressive politics in this regard, is to initiate and establish a dialogue between these two philosophical positions.

Here we can ask a pertinent question: can *difference* and *identity* be made commensurate with the project of *equality*, evidently one of the cherished core principles of the left? Here, Laclau's argument holds some merit:

(p.225) The proliferation of differences is the precondition for the expansion of the logic of equality. To say that two things are equal—i.e. equivalent to each other in some respects—presupposes that they are different from each other in some other respects (otherwise there would be no equality but identity). In the political field equality is a type of discourse which tries to deal with differences; it is a way of organizing them.⁶⁹

Similarly, in the Indian context, Dalits, Adivasis, Muslims, and women have *different* identities, but they can be equivalent regarding say, conditions of oppression, exploitation, deprivation, discrimination, exclusion, and so on and furthermore, negatively affected by the neoliberal policy regime. Thus, their enemy is also common, namely neoliberalism. The identification of the *enemy* creates conditions of possibilities for a further political bond between these marginalized groups to come together and emerge as the collective political actor of the *people* to fight the antagonistic frontier of neoliberalism. But how can such a construction of the 'people' be made at the level of political praxis? In this respect, an insightful example given by Laclau is impressive:

In a situation of extreme oppression—the Tsarist regime, for instance—workers start a strike demanding higher wages. The demand is a particular one, but in the context of that repressive regime it is going to be seen as an anti-system activity. So the meaning of that demand is going to be split, from the very beginning, between its own particularity and a more universal dimension. It is this potentially more universal dimension that can inspire struggles for different demands in other sectors—students for the relaxation of discipline in educational establishments, liberal politicians for freedom of the press, and so on. Each of these demands is, in its particularity, unrelated to the others; what unites them is that they constitute between themselves a chain of equivalences in so far as all of

them are bearers of an anti-system meaning. The presence of a frontier separating the oppressive regime from the rest of society is the very condition of the universalization of the demands via equivalences (in Marx's words: a social sector has to become a general 'crime' for the aims of society as a whole to emerge).⁷⁰

(p.226) So far the left has failed to understand that both identity and identity formation, related to socio-political, cultural, and psychological processes, are essential political categories without which any politics is impossible. The psychoanalytic category of *identification* in the making of identities is also important in this regard and identity construction is a hegemonic socio-political and cultural construct,⁷¹ something which the Indian left has traditionally overlooked. The left failed to understand that identity and its formation are fundamental issues without which any politics is impossible and irrelevant. The centrality of working class as the universal emancipatory class, playing the role of a vanguard has been long cherished all throughout the international communist movement. But the thesis of the centrality of the working class has been questioned due to the failure of the traditional communist movement to engage with a theory of an orthodox class-centric approach. In the meantime, right from the 1960s, several non-class antagonisms in the name of gender struggle, questions of ethnicity, linguistic nationalities and in the Indian context—caste oppression, tribal rights, and communal discrimination—have emerged in the political field where the left has been operating. Initially, the left responded by noting that all these non-class contradictions are non-antagonistic ones by going along with the classical Marxist-Leninist line, and even going further to say that these were conspiracies by the ruling classes to divide the working class. Even the category of *identity* was posed as American-funded theoretical tools for anti-left postmodern theorists. It is true that there were attempts to manipulate group identities in many cases and a section of the anti-left camp tried to make an offensive against the left based on these issues both ideologically and theoretically. But such a condition existed precisely because the left did not seriously address the questions of *difference* and *identity*. There is simply no denying the fact that the left made a monumental mistake in analysing the issues of identities and non-class antagonisms or what the left ideologues termed as non-antagonistic contradictions because for the left, only class contradictions are primary and antagonistic while others are secondary and non-antagonistic.

Although the non-class antagonisms were manipulated by the power bloc, one should not forget that those antagonisms had existed **(p.227)** for a long time in India. Some of these antagonisms were repressed due to brahminical and patriarchal hegemony, and when the conditions of possibilities for the emergence of those assertive identitarian politics became evident with new openings in the field of Indian politics, we came to witness the politics of particularism in the name of Dalits, Adivasis, Muslims, and so on. One could

argue that the proliferation of politics of particularisms in the name of Dalits, Adivasis, Muslims, and so on is the symptom of the *return of the repressed* demanding its own rights in its own ways and in its own language of protest in the middle of dominant political discourses shaped by a core class agenda by both bourgeois and left-wing politics. Since, the community-specific politics of particularism lacked a progressive political articulation such as a universalist political agenda of the left, the *available* political language among the marginalized and excluded communities became a mode of protest against the power bloc. So, it is the urgency of such a progressive political articulation among Muslims—a political necessity of our time—which could construct a wider equivalential chain with other particular groups such as the Dalits, Adivasis, and women in order to ensure a universalist struggle for the emancipation of people with an *inclusive people's politics* in a neoliberal India. This is because the Indian left needs to understand that the marginalized and excluded groups such as Dalits, Adivasis, women, and Muslims constitute an overwhelming majority of the working classes and the peasantry as there is a significant overlap between marginalized group identities and (working) class identities in contemporary India. That is to say, if one belongs to any of the four above-mentioned marginalized groups, then the probability of such a person belonging to the working class or the peasantry is also high. In the case of the Muslim question, which is the prime theme of this book, we can argue that both Indian Muslims and Indian progressives have to think of a broader political alliance collectively and about how both can engage with each other in order to construct the desired political goal of emancipation from the exploitative and oppressive structures of neoliberalism.

Towards a Progressive Political Articulation among Indian Muslims

On 22 August 2017, the Supreme Court of India delivered a landmark judgment on triple *talaq* [divorce]. It termed the pronouncement of **(p.228)** instant triple *talaq* (*talaq-e-biddat* or heretical and irregular mode of divorce) as 'unconstitutional' by a 3:2 majority vote in the five-judge bench. The judgment was certainly a progressive step towards building a more egalitarian, fair, and gender-just India. It creates conditions for progressive articulation among Indian Muslims and will strengthen those Muslim groups which fight for progressive causes. The majority verdict termed instant triple *talaq* *void ab initio* (illegal at the outset) while describing the practice as 'manifestly arbitrary'. The majority view also unequivocally declared that instant triple *talaq* went against the basic tenets of the Holy Quran and violated Islamic law or the Shariat.

The practice of instant triple *talaq* has been followed by the Hanafi school of Sunni Islam in India, which forms a substantial majority of the Indian Muslims (about 90 per cent of Sunni Muslims in India, according to the court judgment).⁷² Those who claim to be outside the four primary schools of Sunni Islam (Hanafi, Malaki, Shafei, and Hanbali) such as Shia Muslims and the followers of the Ahl-i-Hadith tradition do not follow the practice of instant triple

talaq. The Supreme Court judgment also cited the examples of Pakistan and Bangladesh, both of which banned instant triple talaq (Pakistan in 1961 and Bangladesh amending the 1961 Ordinance in 1985); it is exceptionally significant that these countries took the measure even though an overwhelming majority of the population adhere to the Sunni Hanafi school.⁷³ The Court judgment has rightly pointed out that the practice of divorce through talaq-e-biddat was 'prevalent in states having sizeable Muslim populations',⁷⁴ but it has been 'statutorily done away with ... by legislation, the world over, in Islamic, as well as, non-Islamic States',⁷⁵ including Turkey, Egypt, and Afghanistan where the majority of Muslims are followers of the Sunni Hanafi school. This particular judgment has long-term implications for further reforms of several patriarchal aspects of Muslim personal law relating to alimony for divorced **(p.229)** Muslim women, polygamy, methods of remarriage (*nikah halala*), and inheritance. While in many Muslim countries, such practices have been banned long ago, Indian Muslims had to wait for many decades and that too for judicial intervention to outlaw the inhumane practice of instant triple talaq, which was legitimized by the Muslim Personal Law (Shariat) Application Act of 1937.⁷⁶

The absence of a progressive political leadership among Muslims in India has created conditions in which the theo-political identity of Indian Muslims has been foregrounded by the conservative section of the Muslim community at the cost of class issues (education, health, employment) and citizenship identities. The traditionalists among Indian Muslims have taken advantage of the silence of the majority of moderate Muslims, who might diligently follow Islam but are not vocal enough to protest against the misuse and misinterpretation of the Islamic religion by the conservatives on many occasions. Although one can notice a crisis of progressive political articulation among Muslims in India, it is indeed not absent from the Muslim community. In the past, there were progressive voices who protested against injustices, as in the case of Shah Bano, and today one can see the activism of Bharatiya Muslim Mahila Andolan, Bebaak Collective, Awaz-e-Niswaan, Sahiyar, Muslim Mahila Manch, Pehchan, Muhim, Parvaaz Sangathan, and so on who joined the cause of five Muslim women petitioners—Shayara Bano, Gulshan Parveen, Ishrat Jahan, Afreen Rahman, and Farha Faiz—in the case against instant triple talaq. These groups are run by Muslim women and have been involved in numerous struggles for dignity, gender justice, and gender equality in the last three decades.

The political implication of the triple talaq judgment is all too apparent. No matter how many normative appeals are being made for not politicizing the court judgment, the fact of the matter is that it could be a talking point of a pragmatic and calculated political campaign for the BJP in future elections. BJP spokespersons have already reminded about the Rajiv Gandhi-led Congress government's capitulation before conservative Muslim leaders in the Shah Bano case in the matter of alimony for divorced Muslim women during 1985–6, and positing this in contrast to the party's public support for this issue along with the

BJP-led central government's support of the affidavit in the case against **(p.230)** triple talaq. Although the BJP can undoubtedly celebrate this judgment, the track record of the RSS (the BJP's ideological mentor) and the Hindu Mahasabha is abysmal as far as the personal law reforms in the form of the Hindu Code Bill is concerned. Both the RSS and the Hindu Mahasabha along with some Congress leaders vehemently opposed the Hindu Code Bill just as there was recent support from some RSS and BJP leaders for discriminatory practices towards women regarding temple entry in Sabarimala in Kerala in the name of 'tradition'. It is interesting to note that regarding reforms of personal laws, the minorities in South Asia suffer more than the majority communities. For example, just like the reforms of the Hindu Code Bills in 1955-6 in India, Muslim personal laws were reformed in 1961 in Muslim-majority Pakistan in the form of banning instant triple talaq, as pointed out earlier. However, like the delay in Muslim Personal Law reforms in India, the reform measures in Hindu Personal Laws in Pakistan and Bangladesh, where Hindus are a minority group, are still waiting to see the light of the day. This shows the lack of initiatives for reforms within minority communities in the three major countries of the Indian subcontinent on the one hand and the lack of interest on the part of the state to deliver necessary reforms for the religious minorities on the other side.

The point being discussed here is made amply clear in the Supreme Court judgment on instant triple talaq. The judgment has clearly denied an indisputable provision to bring in a law on Muslim personal matters while setting aside the triple talaq issue from the rest of the Muslim personal law. But this historic judgment has created conditions for further reforms in the personal laws for both Muslim and non-Muslim citizens of the country. If a radical initiative for personal law reforms or uniform civil code is to be made in the future, then it must be preceded by democratic forms of more extensive public debates, followed by referendum among each significant religious community in the country. Neither the All India Muslim Personal Law Board nor the Sangh Parivar represents the Muslims and Hindus respectively. If laws are meant to govern the lives of the citizens, then the citizens must decide how they should be governed.

It is this peculiarity of the minority situation of Indian Muslims that is marked by the ignorance and indifference of the state towards the development of the community, along with the particularity of the Indian Muslims that differentiates them from the Muslims in **(p.231)** Muslim-majority countries, that gives the Muslim question in India a unique dimension. Such a particular narrative about Indian Muslims can be found in Hussain Haidry's poetry that went viral in social media. The poem, starts off by asking, 'Main kaisa Musalman hoon bhai?' or 'What kind of a Muslim am I, brother?' and ends with 'Main Hindustani Musalman hoon' or 'I am a Hindustani Muslim', describing the Indian Muslim as an amalgam of various cosmopolitan influences:

Apne hi taur se jeeta hoon
(I live the way I want to)

Daaru cigarette bhi peeta hoon
(I smoke, I drink)

Koi neta meri nas nas mein nahi, main kisi party ke bas mein nahi
(I have not sworn my allegiance to any politician or political party)

Main Hindustani Musalman hoon...
(I am what I am, an Indian Muslim)

Mujh mein Gita ka saar bhi hai
(The essence of the Gita is also in me)

Ek Urdu ka akhbaar bhi hai
(So is an Urdu newspaper)

Sau me se 14 hoon lekin
(I am 14 out of 100 but)

Chaudah yeh kam nahin padte hain
(These 14 are not few in number)

Main poorey sau mein basta hoon
(I reside in the entire 100)

Poorey sau mujh mein bastey hain
(The entire 100 reside in me).⁷⁷

If one follows the Laclauian categories of *availability* and *credibility* of a political discourse from the epigraph of this chapter, then one **(p.232)** can argue that the simultaneous *availability* of a conservative Islamist political articulation and *unavailability* of a progressive political articulation among Indian Muslims have resulted in the presence of an Islamist audience among a *section* of Muslims in India. This is not to say that Indian Muslims have been largely mobilized by Islamist forces. Admittedly, an overwhelming majority of Muslims in India neither support majoritarianism, nor minority communalism, nor Islamism. But

the *conditions of possibilities* for Islamist political articulations as a prominent political discourse among Indian Muslims can become a reality if democratic demands of the community are not met regularly by the political system.

Returning to the Muslim question, we can argue that instead of tormenting between the debates around 'militant' versus 'moderate' images of Indian Muslims,⁷⁸ both the Left and the Indian Muslims as a community have to collectively think about the possibility of changing the *image* of Muslims to a progressive group by greater political participation in several progressive movements in the country. As previously noted, a significant number of Muslims did participate in huge protest demonstrations against the visit of American President, George W. Bush in India and on the occasion of Saddam's execution in the recent past. But in several other protest demonstrations such as protests against fuel price hike, inflation, and in various forms of protests against neoliberal economic policies organized by the Indian Left, and several centre-Left regional parties, we cannot see the much visible enthusiasm among the Muslim organizations. That is to say, the anti-imperialist consciousness of significant sections of Indian Muslims has more to do with a community identification such as the American repression against Muslim nation-states but it fails to channelize that resentment against the imperialist system as a whole. Therefore, Muslim organizations in India although protest against military interventions of imperialist states in several Muslim countries, but they inadequately understand imperialism as a system of economic plunder. Thus, several Muslim organizations in India only protest against those barbaric wars that are very much evident but lack a similar enthusiasm of protests against the **(p.233)** economic impact of imperialism. This is precisely because of the lack of political engagement of the Muslims in India with the progressive movements and vice-versa.

On the other hand, marginalized Muslim groups such as All-India Backward Muslim Morcha and Pasmanda Muslim Mahaz (association of backward-caste Muslims) also do not have much dialogue with the left and other progressive movements in the country and have been mobilized by caste-based regional political parties in Bihar.⁷⁹ Ali Anwar, a leader of the Muslim backward castes, argues that 'Muslim nationalism' was a project of the Ashraf while 'Muslim artisans, weavers, and other occupational castes had vigorously opposed Jinnah's Muslim nationalism—a fact obliterated in nationalist historiography'.⁸⁰ Anwar refers to facts that the Momin Conference organized a big rally in Delhi in 1941 by mobilizing more than 50,000 weavers of Bihar and Eastern Uttar Pradesh⁸¹ against the proposed two-nation theory, and despite the members of the Muslim backward castes being firm believers of Islam, they were opposed to Pakistan.⁸² It is such progressive articulations as that of the backward-caste Muslims that the left and other progressive movements could engage with. Moreover, in the context of aggressive neoliberalism which worsens the situation of marginalized groups such as Muslims, both progressives as a political group

(p.234) and Muslims as a community need to rethink their strategy about a possible political solidarity based on the common interests of the progressive movements and Muslims as a deprived socio-economic group. However, in forging such an alliance, it is primarily the left that has to elaborate upon a credible alternative to neoliberalism instead of trying to manage the neoliberal policy regime more humanely. As Laclau and Mouffe correctly argue:

The Left should start elaborating a credible alternative to the neo-liberal order, instead of simply trying to manage it in a more humane way. This, of course, requires drawing new political frontiers and acknowledging that there cannot be a radical politics without the definition of an adversary. That is to say, it requires the acceptance of the ineradicability of antagonism.⁸³

Besides the genuine willingness of the progressives to seriously engage with Muslim minorities in India, today, Indian Muslims also need more left activists such as Safdar Hashmi, intellectuals such as Faiz Ahmed Faiz and Sajjad Zaheer, and freedom fighters such as Muzaffar Ahmed and Shaukat Usmani, who although were born in Muslim families, donned a *progressive political identity* instead of being necessarily identified with a 'Muslim persona'. This is important when the country is formulating a new freedom struggle against neoliberal globalization. Indian Muslims cannot shy away from their participation in the current battle against neoliberalism, a struggle that strives to ensure the victory of the Indian people for a just and egalitarian society.

Indian Muslims also need to understand that only active participation in leftist and progressive movements can help them to address the socio-economic problems of the community, since the left and progressive politics prioritize the interests of the working class besides negating the oppressive and exploitative policies of the neoliberal power bloc. To quote Faiz, 'Hum dekhenge, lazim hai ke hum bhi dekhenge, wo din ke jiska wada hai' (We shall see, for it is necessary that we shall also see, that day which has been promised). The glorious destiny of Indian Muslims would only come true when by 'promise' the Muslims **(p.235)** would not only mean the Islamic concept of the Last Day of Judgment (*qayamat*), but when Muslims collectively would indicate the *promise* of the day of emancipation from human bondage, the sign of the day of liberation from religious bigotry, the hope of the day of freedom from neoliberalism, and the promise of the day of Indian revolution. Such a revolutionary potential can be found in the radical democratic politics that I want to propose in the epilogue of this book.

Notes:

(*) Akeel Bilgrami, 'What Is a Muslim? Fundamental Commitment and Cultural Identity', *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 18, no. 4, 'Identities' (Summer, 1992), p. 838.

([†]) Ernesto Laclau, *New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time* (London: Verso, 1990), p. 66.

(¹) Hilal Ahmed, *Muslim Political Discourse in Postcolonial India: Monuments, Memory, Contestation* (New Delhi: Routledge, 2014), pp. 4–28.

(²) Ahmed, *Muslim Political Discourse in Postcolonial India*, p. 5.

(³) Ahmed, *Muslim Political Discourse in Postcolonial India*, p. 5.

(⁴) Ahmed, *Muslim Political Discourse in Postcolonial India*, p. 5.

(⁵) Ahmed, *Muslim Political Discourse in Postcolonial India*, p. 8. In discussing the ‘Muslim homogeneity perspective’, Ahmed focuses on the writings of Syed Shahabuddin than that of Iqbal Ansari.

(⁶) Ahmed, *Muslim Political Discourse in Postcolonial India*, pp. 13–14. In discussing the ‘social assimilation’ thesis, Ahmed mainly focuses on the writings of Imtiaz Ahmad than that of T.N. Madan.

(⁷) Ahmed, *Muslim Political Discourse in Postcolonial India*, pp. 15–17.

(⁸) Ahmed, *Muslim Political Discourse in Postcolonial India*, p. 19.

(⁹) Ahmed, *Muslim Political Discourse in Postcolonial India*, pp. 21–4.

(¹⁰) Ahmed, *Muslim Political Discourse in Postcolonial India*, pp. 22–3.

(¹¹) Ahmed, *Muslim Political Discourse in Postcolonial India*, pp. 24–8.

(¹²) Ahmed, *Muslim Political Discourse in Postcolonial India*, p. 26.

(¹³) Ahmed, *Muslim Political Discourse in Postcolonial India*, p. 28.

(¹⁴) For a more detailed analysis on this issue of the Congress line of ‘soft Hindutva’ in the context of the Babri Mosque demolition and Gujarat 2002 assembly election, see Sudhir Chandra, ‘A Lament for a Decade’, in *Communalism, Civil Society and the State: Reflections on a Decade of Turbulence*, edited by K.N. Panikkar and Sukumar Muralidharan (New Delhi: SAHMAT, 2003), pp. 7–17.

(¹⁵) Maidul Islam, *Limits of Islamism: Jamaat-e-Islami in Contemporary India and Bangladesh* (New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 28–40.

(¹⁶) Khizar Humayun Ansari, *The Emergence of Socialist Thought among North Indian Muslims, 1917–1947* (Lahore: Book Traders, 1990).

(¹⁷) See news reports, 'Saddam's Hanging Etched in Memory of Muslims', *The Hindu*, 13 January 2007, p. 4; 'Shift U.N. Headquarters: Jaffer Sharief', *The Hindu*, 20 January 2007, p. 12.

(¹⁸) Akeel Bilgrami, 'What Is a Muslim? Fundamental Commitment and Cultural Identity', *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 18, no. 4, Identities (Summer, 1992), pp. 821–42.

(¹⁹) Shreyas Sardesai, Pranav Gupta and Reetika Sayal, 'The Religious Fault Line in the 2014 Election', *Panjab University Research Journal Social Sciences* [Lok Sabha Elections 2014 Special issue in collaboration with Lokniti-CSDS, Delhi], vol. 22, no. 2 (2014), p. 33.

(²⁰) Sardesai, Gupta, and Sayal, 'The Religious Fault Line in the 2014 Election', p. 30.

(²¹) Sardesai, Gupta, and Sayal, 'The Religious Fault Line in the 2014 Election', p. 33.

(²²) Ernesto Laclau's reply to Judith Butler: 'The Uses of Equality' (Appendix I)', in *Laclau: A Critical Reader*, edited by Simon Critchley and Oliver Marchart (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 331.

(²³) Islam, *Limits of Islamism*; Irfan Ahmad, *Islamism and Democracy in India: The Transformation of Jamaat-e-Islami* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2009).

(²⁴) Islam, *Limits of Islamism*, pp. 110–69.

(²⁵) Mushirul Hasan, ed, *Living with Secularism: The Destiny of India's Muslims* (New Delhi: Manohar Publishers, 2007).

(²⁶) A philosophical discussion on the Rushdie controversy is brilliantly articulated by Akeel Bilgrami, 'After the Fatwah: Twenty Years of Controversy', in his *Secularism, Identity, and Enchantment* (Ranikhet: Permanent Black, 2014), pp. 260–78.

(²⁷) Partha Chatterjee, 'Satanic? Or the Surrender of the Modern?' in his *A Possible India: Essays in Political Criticism* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 178.

(²⁸) William Dalrymple, 'Why Salman Rushdie's Voice Was Silenced in Jaipur', *The Guardian* (London), 27 January 2012.

(²⁹) Dalrymple, 'Why Salman Rushdie's Voice Was Silenced in Jaipur'; Akhilesh Kumar Singh, 'Salman Rushdie Not to Attend Jaipur Literature Festival', *Times of India* (New Delhi), 21 January 2012.

(³⁰) Akhilesh Kumar Singh, 'Salman Rushdie Persuaded to Stay Away from Jaipur Literature Festival', *Times of India*, 17 January 2012.

(³¹) Singh, 'Salman Rushdie Persuaded to Stay Away from Jaipur Literature Festival'.

(³²) 'Salman Rushdie's Kolkata Visit Cancelled due to Security Reasons', *Times of India*, 31 January 2013.

(³³) 'Salman Rushdie's Kolkata Visit Cancelled due to Security Reasons' *Times of India*, 31 January 2013.

(³⁴) See Islam, *Limits of Islamism*, pp. 67, 150–2, 243, 252–64.

(³⁵) An interesting way of examining the emotional 'politics of hurt' in the Indian context can be seen in Mohammed Mehdi, 'The Politics of Hurt Religious Feelings: The Minority as Emotional Subject in India', in *Becoming Minority: How Discourses and Policies Produce Minorities in Europe and India*, edited by Jyotirmaya Tripathy and Sudarsan Padmanabhan (New Delhi: Sage, 2014), pp. 253–72.

(³⁶) On this issue see Joya Chatterji, 'Of Graveyards and Ghettos: Muslims in Partitioned West Bengal, 1947–67', in *Living Together Separately: Cultural India in History and Politics*, edited by Mushirul Hasan and Asim Roy (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 222–49; Joya Chatterji, *The Spoils of Partition: Bengal and India, 1947–1967* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Sekhar Bandyopadhyay, 'The Minorities in Post-Partition West Bengal: The Riots of 1950', and Abhijit Dasgupta, 'On the Margins: Muslims in West Bengal', both in *Minorities and the State: Changing Social and Political Landscape of Bengal*, edited by Abhijit Dasgupta, Masahiko Togawa, and Abul Barkat (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2011), pp. 18–38.

(³⁷) Meghna Guha Thakurta, 'Uprooted and Divided', in *The Trauma and the Triumph: Gender and Partition in Eastern India*, edited by Jasodhara Bagchi and Subhoranjan Dasgupta (Kolkata: Stree, 2003), pp. 104–5; Nitish Sengupta, *Bengal Divided: The Unmaking of a Nation (1905–1971)* (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2007), p. 234.

(³⁸) *The Telegraph*, 31 December 2006.

(³⁹) S. Sayyid, *Recalling the Caliphate: Decolonisation and World Order* (London: Hurst & Co., 2014), pp. 134–5.

(⁴⁰) Donna M. Summerfield, 'Fitting versus Tracking: Wittgenstein on Representation', in *The Cambridge Companion to Wittgenstein*, edited by Hans

Sluga and David G. Stern (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 110.

(⁴¹) Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, translated by G.E.M. Anscombe, reprinted paperback ed. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991 [1953]), para no. 141, p. 55e.

(⁴²) Summerfield, 'Fitting versus Tracking', p. 110.

(⁴³) Summerfield, 'Fitting versus Tracking', p. 110.

(⁴⁴) *The Telegraph*, 31 December 2006.

(⁴⁵) *The Telegraph*, 31 December 2006.

(⁴⁶) *The Telegraph*, 31 December 2006.

(⁴⁷) 'Sanctioned violence' is a form of violence that is implicit in the everyday social and political discourses that are often accepted as normal. It is located behind the veil of modern structures of power such as propaganda, media campaign, advertisements, and publicity mechanisms such as the image industry. Sanctioned violence essentially produces *discrimination* between two similar works or persons committing the same acts. It is a form of omission, exclusion, silence, and suppression while shaping a discourse. Thus, the 'sanctioned violence' produced by the dominant power bloc essentially conditions and programmes the 'excluded' to show resistance against the 'most excluded' or 'excluded of the excluded' and be passive conformists to the elites. Here, this sanctioned violence is used in the form that Walter Benjamin has conceptualized by distinguishing between 'lawmaking violence' and 'law-preserving violence'. Such a distinction is based on whether the end towards which violent methods are used is 'historically acknowledged'. That is to say, whether such violence is 'sanctioned' or 'unsanctioned' with links to 'legal ends' and 'natural ends'. If violent means are directed towards natural ends such as in the cases of war among nation-states as evident from the example above in the imperialist war against Iraq, where one or more states use violence to ignore historically acknowledged laws such as borders, then such violence would be law-making. Such violence strives towards a 'peace ceremony' that would constitute a new historically acknowledged law and new historically acknowledged borders. For a philosophical discussion on this issue, see Walter Benjamin, 'Critique of Violence' [1921], in *Selected Writings, Vol. 1, 1913-1926*, edited by Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings (London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1996), pp. 236-52. For a brief commentary on the concept, see Signe Larsen, 'Notes on the Thought of Walter Benjamin: Critique of Violence', *Critical Legal Thinking: Law and the Political*, 11 October 2013,

available at <http://criticallegalthinking.com/2013/10/11/notes-thought-walter-benjamin-critique-violence>, accessed on 15 March 2018.

(⁴⁸) See the news report by Kirk Semple, 'Iraq Confronts Saddam Legacy Cast in Bronze,' *The Hindu*, 9 April 2007, p. 11.

(⁴⁹) See 'Protests across India against Saddam's Execution', *Reuters*, available at <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iraq-saddam-india/protests-across-india-against-saddams-execution-idUSDEL13303920061230>, accessed on 30 March 2018.

(⁵⁰) 'Protests across India against Saddam's Execution'.

(⁵¹) See 'Saddam Hussein's Execution Sparks Protests', *The Hindu*, 31 December 2006, available at <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-kerala/Saddam-Husseins-execution-sparks-protests/article16912880.ece>, accessed on 30 March 2018.

(⁵²) See 'Saddam's Hanging Etched in Memory of Muslims', *The Hindu*, 13 January 2007, p. 4.

(⁵³) 'Saddam's Hanging Etched in Memory of Muslims', p. 4.

(⁵⁴) See 'Shift U.N. Headquarters: Jaffer Sharief: Several Injured as Violence Marks Protest in Bangalore against Saddam Execution', *The Hindu*, 20 January 2007, p. 12.

(⁵⁵) 'Shift U.N. Headquarters: Jaffer Sharief', p. 12.

(⁵⁶) The entire story is narrated in the news report by Shobha John, 'A Throne for Saddam, from India', *The Times of India*, 29 February 2004, available at <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/delhi/A-throne-for-Saddam-from-India/articleshow/526455.cms>, accessed on 30 March 2018.

(⁵⁷) Author's translation from Hindi.

(⁵⁸) Dale F. Eickelman and James Piscatori, *Muslim Politics* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996), p. 11.

(⁵⁹) Eickelman and Piscatori, *Muslim Politics*, p. 12.

(⁶⁰) Ali Shari'ati, *On the Sociology of Islam*, translated by Hamid Algar (Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1979), p. 71.

(⁶¹) Eickelman and Piscatori, *Muslim Politics*, p. 13.

(⁶²) For a detailed understanding of the concept of 'empty signifier', see Laclau, 'Why do Empty Signifiers Matter to Politics?' in *Emancipation(s)*, pp. 36–46. For

examples of constructing the people as an empty signifier in secular politics, see Laclau, *On Populist Reason*.

(⁶³) A detailed account of the judicial enquiry episodes of S.A.R. Geelani and the issues related to the Parliament attack case have been very well documented in *13 December, A Reader: The Strange Case of the Attack on the Indian Parliament* with an introduction by Arundhati Roy (New Delhi: Penguin Books India, 2006); Nandita Haksar, *Framing Geelani, Hanging Afzal: Patriotism in the Time of Terror* (New Delhi: Promilla & Co., Publishers and Bibliophic South Asia, 2007); and Nirmalangshu Mukherji, *December 13: Terror over Democracy* (New Delhi: Promilla & Co., Publishers and Bibliophic South Asia, 2005).

(⁶⁴) See Syed Bismillah Geelani, 'The Media Constructs a Kashmiri Terrorist', in *13 December*, pp. 57–79; Shuddhabrata Sengupta, 'Media Trials and Courtroom Tribulations', in *13 December*, pp. 29–56.

(⁶⁵) Michel Foucault, 'Governmentality', in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, edited by Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon and Peter Miller (London: Harvester Press, 1991), p. 102.

(⁶⁶) Foucault, 'Governmentality', p. 100.

(⁶⁷) Nancy Fraser, 'Social Justice in the Age of Identity Politics: Redistribution, Recognition, and Participation', in *Redistribution or Recognition? A Political-Philosophical Exchange*, edited by Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth (London: Verso, 2003), p. 8.

(⁶⁸) Fraser, 'Social Justice in the Age of Identity Politics', pp. 8–11.

(⁶⁹) Laclau's Reply to Judith Butler: Butler and Laclau, 'The Uses of Equality' (Appendix I), p. 331.

(⁷⁰) Ernesto Laclau, 'Constructing Universality', in *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality: Contemporary Dialogues on the Left*, edited by Judith Butler, Ernesto Laclau, and Slavoj Žižek (London: Verso, 2000), p. 302.

(⁷¹) Ernesto Laclau, 'Introduction', in *The Making of Political Identities*, edited by Ernesto Laclau (London: Verso, 1994), p. 3.

(⁷²) The Supreme Court Judgment on *Instant Triple Talaq*, dated 22 August 2017, p. 131, available at https://www.sci.gov.in/supremecourt/2016/6716/6716_2016_Judgement_22-Aug-2017.pdf, accessed on 23 August 2017.

(⁷³) The Supreme Court Judgment on *Instant Triple Talaq*, p. 45.

(⁷⁴) The Supreme Court Judgment on *Instant Triple Talaq*, p. 33.

(⁷⁵) The Supreme Court Judgment on *Instant Triple Talaq*, p. 122

(⁷⁶) The Supreme Court Judgment on *Instant Triple Talaq*, pp. 79, 94–6.

(⁷⁷) Quoted from Jyoti Punwani, ‘Who Is “Hindustani Musalman”, the Man behind Social Media’s Favourite Poem?’ Scroll.in, 21 February 2017, available at <https://scroll.in/magazine/829749/who-is-hindustani-musalman-the-man-behind-social-medias-favourite-poem>, accessed on 2 April 2018; V. Kumara Swamy, ‘Language without Borders’, *The Telegraph* (Kolkata), 15 April 2018.

(⁷⁸) On the issue of historical debates about ‘moderate’ versus ‘militant’ images of Indian Muslims, see Mushirul Hasan, *Moderate or Militant: Images of Indian Muslims* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2008).

(⁷⁹) On the issue of the political mobilization of backward-class Muslims in Bihar, see Sankarshan Thakur, *Single Man: The Life and Times of Nitish Kumar of Bihar* (Noida: HarperCollins, 2014). There is not much academic literature on backward-caste Muslims. Some engagement with this issue has been made by Vidhu Verma, *Non-discrimination and Equality in India: Contesting Boundaries of Social Justice* (London: Routledge, 2012); Azra Khanam, *Muslim Backward Classes: A Sociological Perspective* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2013); Tanweer Fazal, ‘Nation-state’ and Minority Rights in India: *Comparative Perspectives on Muslim and Sikh Identities* (London: Routledge, 2015).

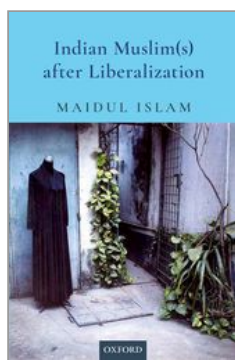
(⁸⁰) Tanveer Fazal, ‘“Being Muslim” in Contemporary India: Nation, Identity, and Rights’. In *Being Muslim in South Asia: Diversity and Daily Life*, edited by Robin Jeffrey and Ronojoy Sen (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 215.

(⁸¹) Such a big gathering of the unorganized sector at that time by a non-prominent political player such as the Momin Conference was not easy to organize.

(⁸²) Fazal, ‘“Being Muslim” in Contemporary India’, p. 215.

(⁸³) Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, ‘Preface’, in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*, 2nd ed. (London: Verso, 2001 [1985]), pp. xvi–xvii.

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Epilogue

Towards a Radical Democratic Politics in India

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Abstract and Keywords

The Epilogue argues that a *politics of social justice* with core democratic demands for affirmative action and representation needs to be complemented with a *politics of distributive justice* that has a concern with equity. Thus, to address the issue of marginalization, a progressive politics needs to articulate the arguments of both 'redistribution' and 'recognition'. The chapter suggests that a radical democratic politics needs to be constructed in such a way that its political appeal is relevant for the marginalized groups, including the Muslims, by emphasizing both social justice and distributive justice with a vision of transcending neoliberal capitalism. In response to the hegemonic presence of neoliberal regime in India, a radical democratic project of creating a platform for articulating the demands of various marginalized sectors of the population namely, workers, peasants, Dalits, Adivasis, women, and Muslims are being proposed in this chapter.

Keywords: politics of social justice, politics of distributive justice, affirmative action, representation, equity, marginalization, redistribution, recognition, radical democratic politics

One of the central tenets of *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* is the need to create a chain of equivalence among the various democratic struggles against different forms of subordination. We argued that struggles against sexism, racism, sexual discrimination, and in the defence of the environment needed to be articulated with those of the workers in a new left-wing hegemonic project. To put it in terminology which has recently

become fashionable, we insisted that the Left needed to tackle issues of both 'redistribution' and 'recognition'. This is what we meant by 'radical and plural democracy'. Today, such a project remains as pertinent as ever—which is not to say that it has become easier to realize.... What is at stake is the building of a new hegemony. So our motto is: 'Back to the hegemonic struggle'.

—Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe*

There is no future for the Left if it is unable to create an expansive universal discourse, constructed out of, not against, the proliferation of particularisms of the last few decades.... The task ahead is to expand those seeds of universality, so that we can have a full social imaginary, **(p.237)** capable of competing with the neoliberal consensus which has been the hegemonic horizon of world politics for the last thirty years. It is certainly a difficult task, but it is one which, at least, we can properly formulate. To do so is already to have won a first important battle.

—Ernesto Laclau†

(p.238) The previous chapter demonstrated the limits of dominant political discourses among Indian Muslims in transcending the neoliberal policy regime. My earlier book, *Limits of Islamism*, disclosed their limitations in presenting an alternative to neoliberalism. The isolation of the Muslim parties and Muslim organizations means that they have limited spaces of operation. Also their core emphasis is on the politics of Muslim particularism, which is a politics for narrow sectarian interests of only the members of that religious community. They have experienced little success in mobilizing various marginalized groups even if on occasion they have rhetorically appealed to several deprived and backward sections of the Indian population. In such a context, who could articulate an alternative radical democratic politics with a progressive political agenda to transcend the neoliberal dispensation? There could be three routes for strategic visions of radical democratic politics in India: (1) left-wing populism, (2) Ambedkarite social democracy, and (3) a federalist political outlook of reimagining India. In this regard, a distinction between left- and right-wing populism must be formulated first before conceptualizing about the possibilities of leftist populism in India.

Left-Wing versus Right-Wing Populism

From the recent experiences in Britain, one could argue that left-wing populists are 'more socio-economically focused' and 'more inclusionary' than the right-wing populists.¹ While agreeing with such an analysis, one could contend that in the current conjuncture, the left populists at least promise an alternative to neoliberalism, while right-wing populists, although critical on occasions in selecting a set of neoliberal policies, do not have a vision of transcending neoliberal capitalism. Moreover, left-wing populism is based on hope with

socially progressive policies, particularly in promising redistributive programmes as part of its ideological vocabulary. In contrast, right-wing populism has been based mainly on a fear of immigrants and has a strong xenophobic character. Among the right-wing populisms, 'the fact [is] that in all cases immigrants are presented as a threat to the identity of the **(p.239)** people, while multiculturalism is perceived as being imposed by the elites against the popular will'.² In the European case, the right-wing populists are also Eurosceptic, who fear that 'more European integration can only mean a reinforcement of neoliberal hegemony' while the left populists could only counter them by uniting European citizens 'around a political project that gives them hope for a different, more democratic future'.³

As this book is anchored by the theoretical framework of Laclau's post-Marxist political theory, I regard populism as a governing principle of democratic political practice and as the only substantive strategy of political mobilization under conditions of representative democracy. Political parties and political movements, irrespective of their ideological persuasions, adopt populist rhetoric and articulate populist political agenda to appeal to various sections of the population against the antagonistic frontier(s) for a significant scale of mobilization of the people. Viewed from such a vantage point, Muditva in India may be considered a right-wing populist phenomena backed by the communal-fascist designs of the RSS. For the believers of this populist ideology the perpetual fear is of those religious minorities whose *punyabhumi* (holy land with the places for pilgrimage), according to Savarkar's classification, is located outside the territorial boundaries of the Indian nation-state, in contrast to those religious groups whose *pitribhumi* (fatherland) and *punyabhumi* fall within the Indian subcontinent. In effect, the RSS campaign is targeted against Muslim and Christian minorities.⁴ The fear of the immigrant is also noticed among parties such as the Shiv Sena, which targets religious minorities as well as the non-Marathi population and treats them as outsiders. Here one must distinguish between the communal fascism of the RSS, which does not contest elections and has a strategic vision of transforming **(p.240)** India into a Hindu Rashtra in the long run, and the BJP. Though the latter is ideologically inspired by the RSS, has to contest elections and, thus, appeal to various sectors of the Indian population. So, while contesting elections, the BJP has to often compromise with the ideological purity of the Brahminical Hindu nationalism of the RSS.

In contrast, what could be the articulatory practice of a possible leftist populism in India? This is a concern that I shall delve upon in this epilogue. However, before theorizing about the possibility of leftist populism in India, one must ask how the conceptual apparatus within left-wing political discourses approach the idea of the *people*. Marx famously said, 'the philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point, however, is to change it.'⁵ In this respect, the question can then be put forward in the following manner: Does the Indian

left need to change its 'interpretation' of the concept of the 'people' to 'change' the country? I try to address this question further in the following sections.

Conceptual Foundation of the 'People' in Left-Wing Political Discourses

In contemporary India, the left has clearly and correctly identified the current neoliberal regime as an antagonistic frontier although it is not clear whether they always struggle against neoliberalism, particularly when they are in power in various states of the country. We can say in the words of Laclau that since 'the identity of the enemy also depends increasingly on a process of political construction',⁶ at least theoretically, the left in this regard has correctly *identified* neoliberalism as the prime enemy of the Indian people. It also has a political imaginary of building a 'people's democratic state' followed by a 'people's democratic revolution'. For this purpose, it has also correctly identified the need to build a 'people's democratic front'. The political discourses in India often equate 'people' with the notion of the 'population'. That is why a special category of 'common people' (*aam aadmi*, *shadharon manush*, and similar regional linguistic variations) within the political discourses in India is designated for deprived or disadvantaged citizens. **(p.241)** However, the conceptual foundation of the *people* in the left-wing political discourses is essentially class defined. The party programmes of major communist parties in India obviously state the struggle they are willing to undertake for Dalits, Adivasis, women, and Muslims, but the 'people's democratic front' as described in those party programmes is essentially *class centric*. That is to say, who would be part of the people's democratic front is essentially decided by what kind of 'class identity' they are ascribed. In this respect, the left needs to reformulate its concept of the 'people' and redefine the people's democratic front by shunning any kind of class reductionism. To reorient the understanding of the concept, first of all, the left needs to reconsider the rigid class-based understanding of the people's democratic front. When considering the definition and reformulation of the people's democratic front, the major question that needs to be considered is whether Dalits, Adivasis, women, and Muslims can also be a part of it? Besides the specific classes, identified as the core constituencies of the people's democratic front and the allies of the people's democratic front, can one think of incorporating marginalized groups such as Dalits, Adivasis, women, and Muslims as potential allies? Could such a broad understanding of a people's democratic front be conceptualized given the significant overlap and blurring of these marginalized identity groups with working-class and peasant-class backgrounds and the specific disadvantage, deprivation, discrimination, and exclusion they face every day under a neoliberal state? Without making the marginalized groups potential allies of the people's democratic front, fight against neoliberalism would perhaps be half-hearted and that would neither resolve the problems of these marginalized groups nor help the left to grow as a counter-hegemonic political force in India.

Theoretically speaking, the Indian left is struggling with its ideological contradictions of choosing between the working class as the universal emancipatory class and the 'people' as a universal political actor. In other words, the left is puzzled about who would lead the politics of emancipation. This is precisely because of its *emphasis on the centrality of the working class* and the *working class party playing the role of a vanguard*. Thus, the left's contradiction can be conceptualized as one of non-identification and misconstruction of the universal emancipatory political actor, namely the 'people'. In this regard, the basic questions that the left has to resolve theoretically are as follows: In an era of **(p.242)** various particularist struggles, can the working class *alone* become the universal political class to represent and articulate the voice of other marginalized and oppressed sections of the population? Can we conceptualize the 'people' in the Indian context as a broader and comprehensive political category and an *inclusive collective political actor* that encompasses the plebeian and disadvantaged groups such as workers, peasants, Dalits, Adivasis, women, and Muslims? Can we argue that the working class itself has become a form of particularism such as other particular marginalized socio-political actors (peasants, Dalits, Adivasis, Muslims, and women)? Although the left has traditionally defined the 'people' along class lines, in the current context, can we redefine the concept of 'people' beyond class lines? It is indeed worth considering whether we can elaborate the *meaning* of the *people* in a Laclauian sense of identifying 'people' with 'plebs' or 'underdogs'.

With regard to India, the left must reformulate the concept of 'people' and 'people's democratic front' to mobilize different particularist groups by articulating different particularist demands. In this respect, 'people' can be theoretically used in a Laclauian sense, which is different from the usual meaning of the term in the dominant political discourses where it is equated with the 'population' as a whole. As Laclau incisively points out, 'traditional terminology—which has been translated into common language—makes this difference clear: the people can be conceived as *populus*, the body of all citizens; or as *plebs*, the underprivileged'.⁷ Laclau's further clarification regarding 'people' and 'populism' conceptually differs from the usual meaning in the dominant political discourses: 'In order to be the "people" of populism, ... we need a *plebs* who claims to be the only legitimate *populus*—that is, a partiality which wants to function as the totality of the community.'⁸ This is because those sections of the population which are responsible for the underprivileged conditions of the *plebs* cannot be a legitimate part of the same community ('people' in this case). The reason behind that is the *plebs* are in an antagonistic relationship with a frontier made up by the rest of the population which is a part of the power bloc and, thus, the chasm between them is 'irretrievable'.⁹

(p.243) Since the collective political actor called the 'people' is a result of an equivalential bond between several identities that are plebeian, it can accommodate both class and non-class particularist identities into its

universalist construct. In this context, Simon Critchley and Oliver Marchart's summary of Laclau's vision of constructing the universal holds merit: 'Political alliances had to be constructed not along class lines but *beyond* class lines in a constant effort to hegemonize a larger universal task.'¹⁰ If political alliances have to be constructed beyond class lines, then the construction of the 'people' as an effective political actor within the imaginary of the left also has to be constructed beyond class lines. To be precise, the 'people' should not be only defined in narrow class terms but must also *include* Dalits, Adivasis, Muslims, and women along with the left's basic classes of workers and peasants in the contemporary context of India. Each of the *particular political actors* such as Dalits, Adivasis, Muslims, and women together with the working class and peasantry can constitute the universal political actor called the *people*. The 'people' cannot play the historic role of representing an emancipatory politics of counter-hegemony as a collective political actor without equivalential articulations of various particular agents of different marginalized sections of the population as mentioned earlier. In the words of Laclau, '[t]he universal is incommensurable with the particular, but cannot, however, exist without the latter.'¹¹ Therefore, the particular is essential so far as constructing the universal is concerned. Thus, the left cannot just deny the importance of particular agents but, in fact, should start building the hegemonic project of constructing the 'people' as a universal political actor by recognizing and acknowledging the significance of particular demands. At the same time, the particular demands can be properly realized when it becomes a part of a larger universal political agenda. As Laclau points out, 'difference and particularisms are the necessary starting point, but out of it, it is possible to open the way to a relative universalization of values which can be the basis for a popular hegemony ... the particular **(p.244)** can only fully realize itself if it constantly keeps open, and constantly redefines, its relation to the universal'.¹² In the Indian context, the universal political agenda of the left in constructing an emancipatory people's politics needs to complement the construction of an *inclusive people* by incorporating both class identities of workers and peasants along with particularisms of varied marginalized groups such as Dalits, Adivasis, Muslims, and women.

A Plea for Left-Wing Populism in India

A radical democratic politics that could challenge the hegemony of the neoliberal regime is more relevant than ever. Such a politics could be articulated with an agenda of left-wing populism. It could be a protracted strategy of political mobilization in which the left needs to construct a popular programme of transforming the current neoliberal regime. The victims of neoliberalism are workers, peasants, Dalits, Adivasis, Muslims, and women—all those who have a plebeian and underprivileged status. Thus, many class- and non-class-oriented demands of several marginalized groups might be articulated in left-wing political discourses with a radical democratic strategy to fight out neoliberalism.

Therefore, with regard to the future of emancipatory politics of the Indian left, there could be an ethico-political project implicit in the radical democratic strategy of left-wing populism to achieve *normative* ideals of 'justice' and 'liberation' from the neoliberal regime.

It might be helpful to see the terms 'popular' and 'populism' in the same sense as Laclau has used in several of his evocative works. To summarize: *It is a hegemonic formation of the underdogs constructed through an equivalential articulation of various particularist demands challenging an antagonistic frontier of the power bloc.* As Laclau observes, 'In the case of populism ... a frontier of exclusion divides society into two camps. The "people", in that case, is something less than the totality of the members of the community: it is a partial component which nevertheless aspires to be conceived as the only legitimate totality.'¹³ **(p.245)** Thus, 'populist claims', 'populism', and 'popular demands' in left-wing political discourses need not necessarily be used pejoratively as is often the case in dominant political discourses. Rather, populism should be regarded as a *strategy for political mobilization*. We can further elaborate by saying that today left-wing populism as an effective strategy of political mobilization might be an important political task of the left, particularly in the wake of the current crisis of the Indian left, reflected in the series of electoral debacles in its former strongholds.¹⁴ The question that one can still ask is the following: Is populism a necessary strategy of political mobilization in a world of globalized capitalism? Laclau gives an insightful answer to this question:

Capitalist development creates many others: ecological crises, imbalances between different sectors of the economy, imperialist exploitation, etc. In that case, the subjects of an 'anti-capitalist' struggle are many and cannot be reduced to a category as simple as that of 'class'. We are going to have a plurality of struggles. Struggles in our society tend to proliferate the more we move into a globalized era, but they are less and less 'class' struggles.¹⁵

Therefore, the current task of the Indian left is to *reconceptualize* the notion of the *people* by constructing a radical democratic alternative **(p.246)** that could ensure the left's cherished political programme of *people's democracy* as the goal of Indian revolution, where the discursive appeal of the *people* would be *inclusive* in its form and content. The current formulation of the left-wing project of the people's democratic front with a central focus on class-based approach should be supplemented with the *inclusion* of other identitarian marginalized groups such as Dalits, Adivasis, women, and Muslims into the leftist forum of the people's democratic front. The possibility of an Indian revolution can only be widened when the class struggles of workers and peasants are complemented with other forms of identity-based conflicts, such as the struggle against caste oppression, the fight against gender discrimination, and struggle against communal hatred, and extended to a much broader battle for equal

opportunities. The equivalential chain between workers, peasants, Dalits, Adivasis, women, and Muslims is essential for such a political programme of left-wing populism. The *people* as perceived by the Indian left needs to be reformulated by *including* the marginalized groups mentioned earlier in its theoretical premise and practical performance in constructing the people's democratic front for completing the political task of people's democratic revolution. Such a project of left-wing populism also has to be complemented by protracted militant extra-parliamentary struggles by the left. Let me now focus on the specifics of pragmatic politics that the left must concentrate on to mobilize the people behind its political project.

First, in a neoliberal regime when the public sector vanishes, and the organized working class shrinks, the political system still tries to address the issues of exclusion, deprivation, and backwardness of marginalized groups through varied forms of affirmative action and *reservation* in education and jobs. In the case of Muslims too, *affirmative action* and reservation have often been repeated within policy debates such as in the recommendations of the Sachar Committee Report and the Ranganath Misra Commission Report. The public sector and the organized working class have been the backbone of traditional left-wing mobilizations. As these two bastions of the left crumble under conditions of a neoliberal economy, the left has to invent new ways of organizing workforce in the unorganized or informal sector. Coordinating with the informal sector labour force is also crucial for mobilizing Muslims since the community is primarily concentrated in that sector. Due to reservations for SCs, STs, and OBCs in the public sector and the lack of (p.247) implementation of the Ranganath Misra Commission report in many states and the central services, the private sector is more attractive to the Muslim youth. As a result, the chances of getting influenced by the trade unions in the public sector is relatively less for Indian Muslims.

Second, the policy of affirmative action including reservation is only a *relief* rather than a *transformative change* in the affairs of excluded groups. The *normative position* of the left cannot afford to argue against the policy of affirmative action. It can only evoke the *limits* of affirmative action that abide by the negotiated terms of the existing political system. Thus, affirmative action can benefit, empower, and give relief to some sections of the population but unless an alternative vision is projected by the left around the normative ideals of equality and distributive justice, the *emancipation* of the people would only be restricted to a utopian idea. Even if positive discrimination continues, the simultaneous persistence of the neoliberal regime in India will cause havoc for the people. The nature of contemporary neoliberalism marked by job loss and jobless growth trajectory, along with income inequality and forced displacement, inexorably worsens the living conditions of the Indian people.

Therefore, resolving the socio-economic deprivation of any particular marginalized identity group cannot rely only on a social justice politics that would argue the case for such groups in and around affirmative action and reservation. However, to address the socio-economic backwardness of these marginalized groups, one must think about the question of distributive justice in a possible post-neoliberal order. The specific politics of *particularist demands* for and around affirmative action and the fulfilment of the same are nothing short of a policy of *appropriation* and *accommodation* by the power bloc. It closes down the possibility of a politics of radical alternative that seeks to alter the power relations of the prevalent society in favour of the people by challenging an existing political system. At the same time, the left also needs to formally address various grievances of Muslim minorities and *recognize* their specific problems apart from foregrounding its oppositional politics to neoliberalism.

Finally, the left has to deal with the specifics of the political leadership of the Muslim community. Since Indian Muslims lack a progressive political leadership, it is the historic task of the left to provide that political guidance in directly addressing the socio-economic issues of **(p.248)** the Muslim community. Both the left as a political group and Indian Muslims as a 'community' could rethink a possible political solidarity among themselves while forging an alliance based on the common interests of the left movement on the one hand and Muslims as a deprived socio-economic group on the other. The left movement also needs to seriously introspect about its attitude towards Muslim minorities, especially in making an in-depth analysis of the contemporary Muslim situation and understanding the genesis of Indian Muslims and the peculiar minority psyche of the group. For these initiatives, the Left has to continuously engage and dialogue with members of the Muslim community on a daily basis at a very local level of its political operation. After all, political mobilization of the Muslims behind a progressive Left movement cannot be possible with merely focusing on token representational politics that many political parties in India practice, whose strategy is to woo Muslim support by promoting selective Muslim leadership in its organization and fielding Muslim candidates in elections. However, this is not to discard the issue of representation. For a fundamental resolution of the socio-economic and political problems of various marginalized groups including the Muslim minorities, and for an active and sustained political mobilization from those sections of the population, the left has to surpass representational politics and carry forward the agenda of both social justice and distributive justice apart from defending the strategic vision of transcending the neoliberal status quo.

In this respect, a progressive politics of the Left has to offer something positive and better to the marginalized groups than the existing political parties in India. Thus, the *political appeal of the Left movement should be constructed in such a manner that various marginalised groups, by and large, could identify with that political project against the common antagonistic frontier of neoliberalism.* The

emancipation of the Indian people from the clutches of neoliberal injustices will only be possible if there is united opposition from the various sectors of the Indian population to transcend the contemporary phase of neoliberalism and reach for a relatively just order. It is with such a universalist emancipatory project for the *people* in a *radical democracy* that the varied problems of the *particularist* identity groups can be fundamentally resolved.

(p.249) Why Can Left-Wing Populism Not Be Championed by Maoists? The left-wing populist agenda of radical democratic politics is intricately connected to democratic political mobilization. It is in this regard that the Indian Maoists have severe limitations in championing and articulating the political project of radical democracy. Apart from an orthodox class-centric approach and the limitations in the class-centric formulation of the united front,¹⁶ like major communist parties in India, the Maoists have three additional problems. First, the military strategy of the Maoists to combat the modern Indian state has become obsolete as it has now become almost impossible to tackle the surveillance system and the humongous military strength of the neoliberal state.¹⁷ In fact, the failure of the Maoists to capture political power through an armed strategy is not only real in India but also in other parts of the world. In the recent past, in Nepal, the Maoists did not opt for an armed seizure of political power and chose electoral democracy. Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), the Shining Path in Peru, the Maoist Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), and several other Maoist groups in Latin America have been unsuccessful in capturing political power through armed guerilla warfare.¹⁸ Many Maoist groups in these countries have been largely restricted to specific zones of forests and mountains, much like the Indian Maoists.

The emergence of a dynamic left in an emerging world is already a sign that the left movement is moving away from 'traditional ideas **(p.250)** associated with socialist theory and practice' of the twentieth century, although there are continuities with the socialist ideas of the twentieth century concerning the role of the nation-state and the attitude towards imperialism.¹⁹ Globally, it is the left-wing populists who have been able to capture political power while fighting neoliberalism. The 'pink tide' of left-wing populism that swept several Latin American countries during the first one and a half decades of the twenty-first century is often anchored around the name and figure of a charismatic leader. For example, democratic and left-wing populist mobilization could be noticed with the popularity of Kirchnerism in Argentina, where both Néstor Kirchner and Cristina Fernández de Kirchner gave a left-wing turn to the traditional Peronist populism of the Justicialist Party. Similarly, left-wing populist leaders such as Hugo Chavez came to power with the call for a Bolivarian revolution in Venezuela. Evo Morales in Bolivia and Rafael Correa in Ecuador are charismatic populist left leaders with massive support. The socialist left in Venezuela, Ecuador and Bolivia or the centre-left populists in Nicaragua, Chile, the Workers Party in Brazil, the socialist left in Portugal, the National Regeneration

Movement (MORENA) in Mexico, and the Coalition of Radical Left (SYRIZA)²⁰ in Greece could be described as variants of left-wing populists. Similarly, left-wing populist articulations have helped to form strong opposition parties such as the Labour Party under Jeremy Corbyn in the United Kingdom. Left-wing populists have also been able to rally significant mass support as evident in the cases of the Podemos in Spain, the Die Linke in Germany, Jean Luc Melechon's Unsubmissive France, or as seen in the enthusiasm for Bernie Sanders in the United States.

One could maintain that there are also limitations of these left populists as in the case of SYRIZA in Greece²¹ and in some cases in Latin America; the left populists have also weakened in Brazil and Argentina **(p.251)** or under serious threat from the opposition in Venezuela. The achievements of the agrarian policies of the left governments in Latin America concerning land redistribution and advancement in agribusiness was complemented by the long commodity boom in the first one and a half decades of the twenty-first century, which helped to increase employment and reduce poverty among the rural subaltern classes. At the same time, the limitation of the transformative social project of the 'pink tide' was that the left governments in South America got entangled within the logic of capitalist liberal representative democracy without further deepening the liberal democratic order to a radical transformative project.²² The post-Marxist framework within which I write this book would undeniably support the fact that the road to power is not perpetual and that contingency, uncertainty, and indeterminacy are ineluctable parts of politics. In other words, the permanent features of human societies are that there is no end to politics and that there is nothing outside politics. Thus, even if there have been setbacks for the Left populists in some parts of Europe and Latin America today, it does not mean that the possibility of building a new hegemony for the left populists does not exist in future. However, what is interesting to note is that traditional communist parties lead none of these successful left-wing populist mobilizations in Europe and Latin America. In such a global context, the Indian Maoists need to understand that today the effect of the practice and norm of electoral democracy has been so profound and instrumental in ensuring the widespread participation of the people in the democratic process that it is difficult to bypass electoral democracy. It has become nearly impossible to earn the consent of the Indian people for a high-risk political game of military war against a technologically superior neoliberal state.

Second, the limits of Maoist politics has been increasingly exposed at a time when a new political subject, namely the *homo oeconomicus* (the individual rational and calculative entrepreneur),²³ has emerged under **(p.252)** conditions of neoliberalism in India. This new subject is very much entrenched within the massive architecture of neoliberal governmentality in India where the calculative entrepreneurial citizen-voter is increasingly becoming individualized and dependent on the doles and subsidies of the modern state.²⁴ These new

citizen-voters are engaged in making Aadhar cards, NREGA job cards, BPL (Below Poverty Line) cards, and so on, which make them increasingly more dependent on the neoliberal state. It is challenging for Maoist politics to organize such a new political subject for high-risk militarist war against the state when this new citizen-voter is so much dependent on the statist agencies. The only path that is open for any form of leftist engagement is to use electoral democracy as a site of popular struggle against neoliberal policies of the Indian state. This electoral democracy, which has been given legitimacy by the Indian state, is the only site that can be subverted by the people. It is a similar kind of electoral democracy that was instrumental in voting for Donald Trump. The Brexit episode also shows that substantial sections of the people have voted against the agenda of the neoliberal establishment. If the alt-right can successfully use electoral politics, it is difficult to imagine that the left cannot do so, especially when there are successful examples from Europe and Latin America.

Third, the Maoists have focused on the primacy of struggle against primitive accumulation in the domain of *jal* (water), *jangal* (forests), and *zamin* (land). Sometimes, their use of a restricted spatial location as a hideout strategy hinders them from coming out in the villages and towns to initiate both economic and political struggles. In effect, such an approach has alienated them from vast sections of workers and peasants in large parts of the country because their restricted territorial location has kept them outside the domain of the struggles against capitalist exploitation and other forms of non-class oppression in hundreds of towns and cities, and thousands of villages and suburbs. So far, I have discussed the potential of left-wing populism as a possible **(p.253)** model of radical democratic politics in India and the limitations of the communist left in India to articulate such a radical democratic agenda. However, besides left-wing populism, what are the grounds of possible alternative politics of radical democracy in India? This is the concern dealt with in the next section.

Ambedkarite Social Democracy and the Possibilities of a Dalit-Muslim Alliance

The social stigma and exclusion that ordinary Muslims face in contemporary India are in many respects relatively similar to what Dalits face. The socio-economically deprived situation of Dalits and Muslims that we got a glimpse of in Chapters 1 and 3 became the reality under the aegis of economic reforms governed by the logic of the neoliberal regime in India. The relatively similar conditions of socio-economic deprivation, social segregation, exclusion, and discrimination of both Dalits and Muslims in neoliberal India create situations where possibilities of a potential solidarity between Dalits and Muslims can be thought about. In this respect, the progressive ideas of Ambedkar become crucial to forge a possible Dalit-Muslim political alliance with the strategic vision of Ambedkarite social democracy.

Ambedkar had been developing his ideas about social democracy in the 1940s, which later received their fullest expression on 26 November 1949 when the Constitution of India was formally adopted. Two months later, the Constitution was put into operation on 26 January 1950, the birth date of the Republic of India. For Ambedkar, democracy was not merely a form of government. In an address delivered on the 101st birthday celebration of Mahadeo Govind Ranade, held on 18 January 1943 in the Gokhale Memorial Hall, Pune, Ambedkar argued that a democratic government presupposes a democratic society.²⁵ Such a democratic society must involve two necessary things:

The first is an attitude of mind, an attitude of respect and equality towards their fellows. The second is a social organization free from rigid social barriers. Democracy is incompatible and inconsistent with **(p.254)** isolation and exclusiveness, resulting in the distinction between the privileged and the unprivileged.²⁶

Ambedkar even gave a theological turn to his cherished goal of social democracy by equating it with the Hindu religious and philosophic doctrine of *Brahmaism*, distinct from *Vedanta* and *Brahmanism*.²⁷

Ambedkar dedicated *Who Were the Shudras? How They Came to Be the Fourth Varna in Indo-Aryan Society*, published in 1946, to Jotirao Phule (1827–90). In his inscription, Ambedkar described Phule as the ‘the Greatest Shudra of Modern India who made the lower classes of Hindus conscious of their slavery to the higher classes and who preached the gospel that for India social democracy was more vital than independence from foreign rule’.²⁸ It was a carefully made statement when the Partition debates were going on, and the fate of the Dalits still remained undecided in what was soon going to be a new republic.

In Chapter 9 of *What Congress and Gandhi Have Done to the Untouchables*, added as the annexure and published in the form of the second edition in 1946, Ambedkar mentioned that parliamentary democracy or political democracy could not succeed if there is no social and economic democracy.²⁹ He further substantiates his claim by arguing the following:

Social and economic democracy are the tissues and the fibre of a political democracy. The tougher the tissue and the fibre, the greater the strength of the body. Democracy is another name for equality. Parliamentary **(p. 255)** democracy developed a passion for liberty. It never made even a nodding acquaintance with equality. It failed to realize the significance of equality and did not even endeavour to strike a balance between liberty and equality with the result that liberty swallowed equality and has made democracy a name and a farce.³⁰

The same words were earlier spoken by Ambedkar on 'Labour and Democracy', a speech that was delivered by him at the concluding session of the All India Trade Union Workers' Study Camp held in Delhi from 8 to 17 September 1943 under the auspices of the Indian Federation of Labour.³¹ In the debates of the third reading of the Draft Constitution from 17 to 26 November 1949, Ambedkar spoke at the end of the discussion, where he formulated his ideas about social democracy, which are often quoted. This speech is arguably one of the most famous in his political career:

We must make our political democracy a social democracy as well. Political democracy cannot last unless there lies at the base of it social democracy. What does social democracy mean? It means a way of life which recognizes liberty, equality and fraternity as the principles of life.... We must begin by acknowledging the fact that there is complete absence of two things in Indian Society. One of these is equality. On the social plane, we have in India a society based on the principle of graded inequality which means elevation for some and degradation for others. On the economic plane, we have a society in which there are some who have immense wealth as against many who live in abject poverty. On the 26th of January 1950, we are going to enter into a life of contradictions. In politics we will have equality and in social and economic life we will have inequality. In Politics we will be recognizing the principle of one man one vote and one vote one value. In our social and economic life, we shall, by reason of our social and economic structure, continue to deny the principle of one man one value. How long shall we continue to live this life of contradictions? How long shall we continue to deny equality in our social and economic life? If we continue to deny it for long, we will do so only by putting **(p.256)** our political democracy in peril. We must remove this contradiction at the earliest possible moment or else those who suffer from inequality will blow up the structure of political democracy which this Assembly has so laboriously built up.³²

Although Ambedkar had an enormously busy public life as a political leader and as an organic intellectual,³³ he, in fact, 'tested every big and small, old and new religion ... trawled the texts and tenets of Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims, Sikhs, and Christians, and indeed made himself an entire career as a scholar of comparative religions'.³⁴ As a scholar of comparative religion, Ambedkar could inspire both Dalits and Muslims to study and know about each other. Ambedkar was a constitutionalist and at the same time his ideas could be considered as a form of 'republicanism' with a radical overtone.³⁵ This is best expressed in Ambedkar's rigorous theoretical arguments on minority rights.³⁶ Ambedkar's conceptualization of minorities was based on 'social discrimination' and not on 'separation in religion'. Since 'social discrimination' was the ground for determining a 'minority', for Ambedkar, both the SCs and the Muslims formed a

minority group in India and hence needed special protection and rights of political representation:

To say that the Scheduled Castes are not a minority is to misunderstand the meaning of the word 'minority'. Separation in religion is not the only test of a minority. Nor is it a good and efficient test. Social **(p.257)** discrimination constitutes the real test for determining whether a social group is or is not a minority.... Muslims are given separate electorates not because they are different from Hindus in point of religion. They are given separate electorates because—and this is the fundamental fact—the social relations between the Hindus and the Musalmans are marked by social discrimination.³⁷

Ambedkar further argued that for the minorities in India, Indian nationalism was a new doctrine of 'the Divine Right of the Majority to rule the minorities according to the wishes of the majority', where 'any claim for sharing of power by the minority is called communalism while the monopolizing of the whole power by the majority is called Nationalism'.³⁸ While studying Ambedkar's ideas on safeguards for minorities, a commentator of Dalit studies claimed that for Ambedkar 'the people belonging to various minorities and the protection of their rights were part of his life mission'.³⁹ Similarly, another sociologist has convincingly argued that Ambedkar's ideas could provide 'a framework for developing a more generalized ideology of protest' for deprived groups.⁴⁰

In the last three decades of the neoliberal regime in India, there has been a rise of the Hindu nationalist politics of the RSS-backed BJP. This surge of Hindu nationalism is committed to building only communal majorities instead of Ambedkar's cherished goal of political majority. The idea of political majority and its fundamental difference with communal majority was discussed by Ambedkar in his last political tract, *Thoughts on Linguistic States* in 1955:

A political majority is changeable in its class composition. A political majority grows. A communal majority is born. The admission to a political majority is open. The door to a communal majority is closed. The politics **(p.258)** of a political majority are free to all to make and unmake. The politics of a communal majority are made by its own members born in it.⁴¹

In the context of the Partition debates, a communal majority was formed by religion. However, Ambedkar clarified in 1955 that electoral majority could also be achieved by castes as well, and that caste majority is also the feature of Indian elections.⁴² In this regard, one must not forget that the RSS is traditionally dominated by upper-caste leaders and activists who believe in the *varna* (caste) system⁴³ and Manusmriti.⁴⁴ It is 'imbued with Brahminic ethos', reluctant towards positive discrimination, hostile to caste-based reservations, and was one of the most vocal opponents to the implementation of the Mandal

Commission recommendations in contrast to the more pragmatic approach of the BJP, which has to manage various caste groups electorally.⁴⁵ Not surprisingly, the RSS chief had made a public statement to review the reservation policy ahead of the 2015 Bihar assembly elections⁴⁶ and a similar comment was made by a noted RSS spokesperson weeks before the 2017 Uttar Pradesh assembly elections.⁴⁷

However, the BJP does not even bother to address the question of Muslim under-representation in various walks of life. The party, on **(p.259)** record, was against the Sachar Committee Report⁴⁸ and did not nominate a single Muslim candidate in the 2017 UP assembly elections.⁴⁹ This is not surprising given the fact that even a so-called moderate face of the BJP, the former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, in a public meeting before the 2002 UP assembly elections had said that the BJP does not need Muslim votes to win elections⁵⁰ and in April 2002 had equated Muslims with terrorists in a conclave in Goa.⁵¹ Such anti-Muslim notions have been a part of the DNA of the BJP and the Sangh Parivar.⁵² Academic studies on Hindu nationalism have emphatically shown how the Hindutva ideologues regard Muslims and Christians as ‘outsiders’.⁵³ Moreover, in the Hindutva discourses, Muslims have been mostly regarded as ‘alien’, ‘violent’, ‘threatening’, **(p.260)** ‘incomplete’, ‘uncultured’, and ‘demonic’ besides questioning the loyalty of the Muslim community towards India—‘the land of Hindus and Hinduism’.⁵⁴ Such casteist and communal-fascist approaches of Hindu nationalism could create possible conditions for a solidarity between Dalits and Muslims, and might help them to identify the Hindu nationalist political project as their antagonistic frontier.

In Chapter 3, we have seen how the Sachar Committee Report and the Ranganath Misra Commission Report clearly demarcate the Muslim community along caste lines with specific broad caste groups of Ashrafs, Ajlafs, and Arzals.⁵⁵ Recently, marginalized Muslim groups in the country such as the All India Backward Muslim Morcha and Pasmanda Muslim Mahaj have been articulating the democratic demands of backward-caste Muslims.⁵⁶ Ambedkar forcefully argued in favour of continuing reservations in education and jobs for socio-economic equality.⁵⁷ In the context of specific recommendations for affirmative action policies for Muslims in the Sachar Committee Report, and the case for 10 per cent reservation for OBC and Dalit Muslims in the Ranganath Misra Report, the backward castes among the Indian Muslims could certainly learn a lot from the ideological discourses of Ambedkar. The demand for reservation is hardly going to decrease and might increase in future given the inability of the current economic regime to create employment in what is now popularly called ‘jobless growth’. Contemporary India is already witnessing a situation where even landed castes and several others who are not listed as SCs, STs, and OBCs also want to be included in one of those categories. Ambedkar’s argument for the persistence of the policy of **(p.261)** reservation in government-funded education and government jobs till such time that socio-

economic equality is achieved, could be the new language of democratic articulation for a possible Dalit-Muslim axis. In other words, Ambedkar could be an inspiring figure for Muslim backward castes in demanding reservation from the state. Furthermore, in the context of a populist democracy such as India, the demands for affirmative action and reservation in the private sector could gather momentum in the future when the state is unable to give adequate employment to large segments of the Indian population.

In other contexts, the Dalit-Muslim coalition could be built around the issue of political representation in legislatures and ministries as well. However, this question of political representation is contingent upon the numerical strength of both Dalits and the Muslims in specific states. Unlike Muslims, Dalits are relatively evenly spread over major states in India, and have reserved constituencies in state assemblies and the Lok Sabha making them an electorally significant group. In contrast, Muslims are relatively more concentrated in the six states of Jammu and Kashmir, Assam, West Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and Kerala. These six states account for more than 60 per cent of the total Muslim population in the country. In other provinces, Muslims are relatively more concentrated in urban centres where a Dalit-Muslim political alliance could be formed in specific assembly and parliamentary constituencies.

Besides the political mobilization of Dalits and Muslims around demands of affirmative action and reservation, the Dalit-Muslim political alliance can also be forged on particular issues such as beef-eating and livelihood questions related to the beef economy. In fact, the recent cases of atrocities against Dalits and Muslims by self-proclaimed cow protectionists and cow vigilantes could create political conditions for a possible Dalit-Muslim axis. However, who could adopt such a strategy of political mobilization?

The narrow and sectarian vision of Muslim particularist groups would undoubtedly hinder the political initiatives to form a credible Dalit-Muslim alliance. At the same time, the traditional politics of Dalit particularism is also counterproductive. This is evident from the political opportunism of some Dalit parties such as the Lok Janashakti Party led by Ram Vilas Paswan; the Republican Party of India (Athawale) led by Ramdas Athawale, which had its roots in the Scheduled Castes Federation of Ambedkar; the Bahujan Republican Ekta Manch led by **(p.262)** Sulekha Kumbhare in Maharashtra; and the Hindustani Awam Morcha led by Jitan Ram Majhi in Bihar. All these Dalit parties were accommodated in the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) formed by the electoral coalition led by the majoritarian and the Hindu nationalist party, BJP, which arguably is inspired by the communal-fascist and casteist visions of the RSS.

Similarly, the Mayawati-led Bahujan Samaj Party aligned with the BJP in UP to form coalition governments in the state in 1995, 1997, and 2002, and has been regarded as a tactical coalition of two very ideologically different parties.⁵⁸ Even though during BSP's reign in UP many problems of the Dalits were addressed, while others remained intact,⁵⁹ it cannot be argued that the party fundamentally articulates a politics for the annihilation of caste. In fact, the political discourses of BSP have been similar to the ones of OBC-based parties such as the Samajwadi Party, whose principal objective 'is not the abolition of the caste system but the establishment of a political practice committed to the removal of upper castes from power and provision of special support in education and employment to caste-based deprived groups'.⁶⁰ Of late BSP has compromised on its earlier demands and slogans by ignoring Dalit causes, trying to woo upper-caste votes, and giving nominations to several upper-caste candidates. This is part of BSP's tactical strategy of transition from the political discourses of Kanshiram's *Bahujan* (politics for many represented by the combined population of SCs, STs, OBCs, and minorities constituting 85 per cent of the Indian population, and about 6,000 caste groups)⁶¹ to *Sarvajan* (catch-all political term for all castes and communities).⁶²

(p.263) I have already demonstrated earlier in Chapter 1 that both Dalits and Muslims are at the receiving end in a neoliberal regime where the Hindutva and neoliberalism are the major ideologies of those ruling the country. In this respect, I shall argue that a new progressive politics needs to be constructed in such a way that its political appeal is relevant for the marginalized groups, including the Dalits and Muslims by emphasizing both social justice and distributive justice with a vision of transcending neoliberalism itself. Such a project must organize a united people's resistance, a kind of counter-hegemonic struggle against all dominant social formations, and against the various structures of power. However, what could be the articulatory practice of such a radical democratic politics?

A front-page slogan of the weekly *L'Ordine Nuovo*, co-founded by Antonio Gramsci in 1919, reads as follows: 'Educate yourselves because we will need all your intelligence. Rouse yourselves because we need all your enthusiasm. Organize yourselves because we need all your strength.'⁶³ This is remarkably similar to Ambedkar's call for 'Educate, Agitate, and Organize', the founding principles and the motto of *Bahishkrit Hitkarni Sabha* (Society to Serve the Interests of Outcastes) established on 20 July 1924.⁶⁴ Ambedkar reiterated the same call in the concluding remarks of a speech delivered at the All-India Depressed Classes Conference in Nagpur on 18 July 1942.⁶⁵ But even before Ambedkar's call, it was Dora B. Montefiore, the English-Australian women's suffragist and a prominent leftist-feminist leader of the British Socialist Party and later the Communist Party of Great Britain, who wrote a polemical pamphlet titled 'Educate, Agitate, Organise' against the British establishment in the closing phase of the First World War.⁶⁶ On this count, the political slogan of the

leftists and Ambedkar is common. In fact, Ambedkar's vision of democratic socialism is undoubtedly **(p.264)** relevant today⁶⁷ when income inequality and unemployment have been a continuing feature of neoliberal India. Many important agendas of such a project of democratic socialism are already being practised by several centre-left governments in Latin America with the call of 'socialism in the 21st century'. Therefore, a new language of politics with a new set of idioms could be created with the help of a compassionate dialogue between the leftists and the Ambedkarites to create a new kind of progressive politics in twenty-first-century India. This is because traditionally, Ambedkarites have emphasized more on caste oppression than economic exploitation while the leftists have stressed mainly on economic exploitation while ignoring the issues of caste-based oppression, exclusion, and discrimination. The new progressive politics in India will only be possible when the class struggles of workers and peasants against economic exploitation will be complemented with other forms of identity-based conflicts such as the struggle against caste oppression, against gender discrimination, against communal hatred, and for equal opportunities.

The ethical foundations of Ambedkar's political ideas were governed by the triad of *dukkha* (sorrow), *sangha* (association or assembly), and *samata* (equality), inspired by the teachings of Buddha.⁶⁸ While using those concepts, Ambedkar often referred to 'dukkha' as the collective suffering of the victims of untouchability, while he used 'sangha' to mean collective fraternity or, as he puts it, the Buddhist notion of *maitree* (harmony) in the form of a democratic community. The ideal of *samata* was very central to his political thought and he, in fact, established the Samata Sainik Dal (the Party of the Fighters for Equality **(p.265)** or the Army of Soldiers for Equality).⁶⁹ Thus, Ambedkar's thought is instrumental and relevant for eradicating the *dukkha* of marginalized groups by foregrounding his ideas of *sangha* and *samata*. In this regard, the idea of an Indian revolution in achieving a *dukkhamukt Bharat* (sorrow-free India) based on *samata* could only be realistically possible in the context of a collectivist struggle of the Indian people. The Indian people must be conceptualized as a plebeian *sangha* of marginalized identity groups of Dalits, Muslims, Adivasis, and women along with class identities such as workers and peasants. Such political discourses have to be constructed by the secular-democratic, liberal, and progressive sections among Indian Muslims and Dalits; along with that the initiatives of new left politics also have to be considered in providing an innovative platform as an agency for ushering a radical democratic politics in India. The equivalential chain between workers, peasants, Dalits, Adivasis, women, and Muslims is essential in transforming and deepening Ambedkar's project of social democracy to a possible radical and plural democracy in future.

In the terminology of political philosophy, we could say that such a radical democratic politics would be concerned with class struggles, anchored around the ideas of *distributive justice* and *equality* on the one hand, and the liberation of marginalized identity groups by non-class struggles around the notions of

social justice, identity, and dignity on the other. It is undoubtedly a difficult political task. However, before such a political mobilization, to theorize about such a possibility is the first step to wage the broader political struggle in the long run.

Promise of the Post-neoliberal Order

So far I have discussed the political agenda of left-wing populism and conditions of possibilities for alternative modes of radical democracy in India, inspired by the post-Marxist political theory of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe on the one hand and the vision of Ambedkarite social democracy on the other. However, although radical democracy and the **(p.266)** political agenda of left-wing populism articulated by Laclau and Mouffe are sound strategies of political mobilization they are without any alternative vision for a possible post-neoliberal political order. Their appeal for challenging neoliberalism and transcending the neoliberal order is sensible, but without a broad preliminary sketch of an alternative to neoliberalism, a radical democratic politics would fail to rally the people behind its political project. In this respect, the promise of a post-neoliberal order is essential for left-wing populist mobilization. This is because long-term and sustainable political mobilization is not possible with only the negative logic of antagonistic frontier. In fact, one has to offer something positive or promise something *better* than the existing model of neoliberalism. In this respect, what could be the possible alternative models to neoliberalism? I shall *briefly* point out two alternative models for a post-neoliberal order, as chalking out a post-neoliberal trajectory in a comprehensive manner is beyond the scope of this book.

First, as neoliberalism is facing an ongoing global crisis for some time now, it is indeed irrational for several governments in the world to not opt for a twenty-first-century version of the Keynesian model of the welfare state. In this respect, a political programme of combining radical democratic politics with a matured version of Keynesian economics can be an answer to the problems of contemporary neoliberalism in India. In the short run, the programme of a radical democratic project in India can be a possible post-neoliberal order, a kind of workable welfare state, which could be a much better version of the twentieth-century welfare states found in the West. When neoliberalism, as a ruling philosophy, is enjoying hegemony within the governmental discourses of policy-making in contemporary India, such a proposal will undoubtedly be considered as unwelcome by the ruling elites and their salaried spokespersons. However, the limits of neoliberalism expressed by the quotidian existence of inequality, unemployment, and corruption only create a new opportunity to launch sustained and long-term militant struggles to ensure the strategic political vision of radical democracy.

There are interesting parallels between the globalized world order before the Second World War and the post-1990s⁷⁰ as well as between **(p.267)** the context of the great economic recession of the 1930s that created conditions for the rise of European fascism and the post-2008 situation in which the losers of globalization find scapegoats in the figure of the immigrant.⁷¹ In this context, one could take appropriate lessons from John Maynard Keynes, whose economic thought saved liberal capitalism from ruin. The Keynesian model could be incorporated in the liberal political articulations of the Congress if it decides to introspect on its fallacious adoption of neoliberalism in the last three decades. The Keynesian approach could be an answer to get out of the mess of economic crisis and its attendant problems in the domain of politics. Many economic issues of the Indian people could be resolved by the practical implementation of Keynesian policies, which could include massive governmental expenditure in health and education, unemployment allowances, pension benefits, and various social welfare programmes including a universal basic income instead of following the neoliberal orthodoxy of austerity measures. Some of the above-mentioned measures have been recently articulated by Thomas Piketty with his brilliant proposal of a 'social state' in the twenty-first century where public funds for higher social spending could be derived from progressive income tax for the top centile of the population, greater financial transparency, and a global tax on capital.⁷² Moreover under neoliberalism, the increasing pace of automation is resulting in the lack of employability. It is in this context of robots, artificial intelligence, and superior machines replacing human labour in future that Keynes becomes more relevant than ever. The distorted political management of victims of capitalist growth and technological progress through the reactionary politics of racism, Islamophobia, and anti-immigration, which often distract the electorate from demanding income and employment from both capital and state, could be replaced by constructive and progressive articulation along Keynesian lines. However, before undertaking such an exercise, the Congress has to frankly admit its past mistakes about the mess of pushing forward the neoliberal agenda. It is because of the uncouth inequality and severe **(p.268)** charges of corruption during the Congress regimes in the period of neoliberalism that conditions were created for the rise of a fascist Hindutva party so that it came to dominate Indian politics for the first time. Unless the Congress communicates a better political economy alternative in the form of Keynesianism, it is nearly impossible for that party to earn credibility among the people.

Second, the left-wing political project is relevant in the times of a crisis of neoliberalism. Recently, Kojin Karatani has proposed an associationist model of communism beyond the trinity of the nation, state, and capital by carrying forward the Marxian idea of communism as an association of associations.⁷³ This associationism is also described by Karatani as a socialism that rejects the state, and which is fundamentally different from 'state socialism' or 'welfare statism' of the twentieth century.⁷⁴ Karatani's model of associationism is best expressed in

his activist model of Local Exchange Trading System (LETS) initially designed by Michael Linton with alternative forms of money and with the launch of the New Associationist Movement (NAM) in Japan, right at the start of the twenty-first century. However, the post-Marxist theoretical position that I subscribe to immediately warns me that such a model of communism only becomes the name of an empty signifier, which is necessary for political mobilization, and it does not mean that if such a society is ever established it will be a society without antagonisms or absence of politics. Karatani blends both Marx's analysis of capitalism and Proudhon's creative anarchism of Exchange Bank or People's Bank.⁷⁵ He advises that to resist capital, we could learn from Gandhi the boycott strategies and the nurturing of cooperatives of consumers and producers as well.⁷⁶ He reminds us that **(p.269)** Gramsci had already acknowledged Gandhi's passive resistance and boycotts as 'a war of position, which at certain moments becomes a war of movement', quite distinct from the underground warfare of armed revolutionaries.⁷⁷ The potential for a non-capitalist cooperative as a war of position is fundamentally different from 'a nationalist movement that cared only for the well-being of national capitals'.⁷⁸ The limitation of the Gandhian project was that it eventually turned out to be a programme for promoting national capital instead of resisting capital in general and organizing workers' or consumers' cooperatives. Marx correctly understood that capital does not become capital at the site of production but at the site of consumption. Money becomes capital at the point of selling. In other words, capital has to be realized and it is only possible if one buys the commodity. In this regard, workers are at the same time consumers.⁷⁹

I must add that Keynes too understood this feature of capitalism. Otherwise, he could not have argued in favour of state intervention in generating effective demand although his prime interest was to create employment.⁸⁰ The sharp inequality and the rising problem of unemployment under neoliberalism is a direct fallout of a demand-constrained economy where significant sections of the population are either unemployable or have limited purchasing power. This is the perennial problem of capitalism, which Marx noticed way back in the nineteenth century. However, in the twenty-first century, the world is increasingly being driven by the forces of automation in the avatars of superior machines, supercomputers, robotics, and artificial intelligence. Automation as a trend was already noticed in the middle of the twentieth century with the increasing use of consumer goods such as washing machines and labour saving technologies. As Edward Luce points out:

(p.270) Henry Ford ... raised the wage he paid to factory employees to \$5 a day, a sum that in the 1920s would afford a comfortable middle-class lifestyle. Three decades later, Ford switched his model when he began to invest in automation. On a tour of the plant with Walter Reuther, the auto union leader, Ford pointed at the robots and said: 'How will you get union dues from them?' Reuther replied: 'How will you get them to buy your

cars?’ It was a good question. We might ask the same today of Google or Facebook. The new economy requires consumers with spending power—just as the old one did. Yet much like the farmer who eats his seed corn, Big Data is gobbling up its source of future revenue.⁸¹

In such a scenario, the constitutive outside of capital in the post-colonial world as discussed by Kalyan Sanyal has been now appended with an additional problem of automation that would create a new round of reproduction of jobless economic growth under conditions of neoliberalism. In effect, ‘surplus population’ would further increase in future because of this new phase of digitization. Those who are interested in transcending neoliberalism could choose between two different routes—Anarcho-Marxism of Karatani and the welfare statism of Keynes. In the wake of the failure of neoliberal policies that are far removed from the ideals of inclusive growth and development or in the popular parlance *sabka sath sabka vikas* (collective efforts inclusive growth), economists need to introspect and guide political leaders to opt for alternative routes to neoliberalism in order to manage this increased population in an age of automation. In contrast, political theorists can only signal and reiterate that politics is the art of the possible and the possibilities must be explored. Only the future can tell what kind of options Indian political leaders and policy-makers will choose. However, they have to promise a post-neoliberal order as the existing status quo of neoliberalism has indeed not been able to reduce sharp inequalities in economic conditions and employment opportunities. The promise of post-neoliberalism must also be complemented with ‘reimagining India’. This India cannot be a ‘new India’ as promised in hyperbolic public speeches. Reimagining India ought to complement an alternative vision of political future.

(p.271) Reimagining India: Democracy as Disagreement and Unity *with Diversity*

The first issue of reimagining India is to emphasize the constitutional description of India as a ‘Union of States’ with more autonomy and federal powers for the states. Demands of more powers for the states do not mean that the states should be given the right to secede from the Indian union. The federalist political structure of India without sovereignty of each constituent states is one of its most important differences from the structure of the European Union. As we know, the European Union is based on sovereign nation-states whereas the union of India is not. Although the linguistic basis of the sovereign nation-states of the European Union has an interesting parallel with the linguistic states of the union of India, there are important differences too. One fundamental difference is that unlike the European Union, the regional states of India do not have a central bank of their own. Otherwise, in geographical expanse, many Indian states are larger than several nation-states of the European Union. To reimagine the future of India, a centralized state is not good. Rather, states should have more financial powers. In the twenty-first century, political movements for autonomy and more powers for the states must be prioritized over notions of

secession from the union of India. The grand narrative of unity *in* diversity has been the feature of the rhetoric of the oldest political party of India. After the Lok Sabha verdict of 2014, another counter-narrative is emerging from the side of the BJP. This counter-narrative is that of unity *without* diversity. In such a narrative, the diversity of Indian states is nullified by the imposition of a homogenous religio-linguistic nationalism of 'Hindu, Hindi, Hindustan' while ignoring the heterogeneity of the Indian nation-state. A radical democratic imaginary must be different from these two grand narratives. It could think about a fundamentally different counter-narrative—unity *with* diversity. This counter-narrative could, therefore, foreground *diversity* over *unity*. Conceptually, without recognizing *diversity*, *unity* is impossible. Asserting the rhetoric of *unity* alone leads to a false unity.

Second, reimagining India with a vision of 'unity with diversity' must be based on *disagreement*, one of the basic tenets of democracy, instead of *tolerance*. The word 'tolerance' or 'toleration' is not even **(p.272)** mentioned once in the Constitution of India.⁸² It does not mean that tolerance is a bad word. However, one must ask whether tolerance is an adequate idea to defend the right to life and liberty in contemporary India when mob lynching, moral policing, and putting constraints on the freedom of expression have become an almost everyday affair in the world's largest democracy. The normative concepts that exist in our Constitution are liberty, equality, justice, rights, welfare, peace, progress, recognition, and, most importantly in the context of our times, harmony. The makers of the Constitution of India believed in the idea of equal citizenship based on the principle of political equality.⁸³ The Constitution guarantees fundamental rights, and if such rights of the citizens are violated the state must act to ensure such rights.⁸⁴

Also, in such a constitutional framework, each citizen has equal rights in matters of freedom of thought, expression, faith, and profession. In effect, the right to life, freedom to choose partners, and dietary habits of citizens are also guaranteed by the constitutional mandate. Evidently, such fundamental rights are getting violated in the cases of mob lynching, whether it has been the instances of cow vigilantism or killings of rationalists or targeting Muslim men in the name of 'love jihad'. Similarly, moral policing on couples in public spaces, physical attacks on women and their verbal abuse by conservative vigilante groups in the recent past are also serious violations of the fundamental rights to life and liberty of the citizens which are enshrined in the Indian Constitution.

According to the media reports, in many cases victims have been denied justice by the police or local administration on many occasions while political leaders have been preaching the civilizational values of tolerance in India. There is no denying the fact that in the cases of mob lynching and moral policing, the state is unable to defend the rights **(p.273)** of its citizens. Thus, the principle of tolerance does not hold in the case of fundamental rights getting violated as

rights guaranteed in the Constitution are prior to any idea of tolerance. These rights have been gained by the people of India after decades of anti-colonial struggle. The rights codified in the Constitution are no less than a contract between citizens and the state. At the same time, it is also a contract among the citizens of India coming from various religious and non-religious groups. The Indian Census even records people from 'no religion'. Since the contract is based on equality of citizenship rather than on any other traits, there are severe limitations to the discourse of tolerance when discussing inter-faith relations. Only a weak state that cannot defend the rights of its citizens could use tolerance as a normative idea.

I would argue that the political vision that could reimagine India should emphasize on *disagreement*, one of the fundamental tenets of democracy, instead of *tolerance*. The concept of tolerance re-inscribes the so-called *superiority* of the tolerant subject over the so-called *inferiority* of the intolerant and tolerated. The argument for tolerance attempts to articulate that the tolerant person deserves more respect than the tolerated as it is the *greatness* of the tolerant subject that allows the tolerance of the very different way of life, thinking, and practices of the tolerated. In this form of condescending and patronizing attitude the so-called intolerant and tolerated subjects are defined by the parameters of the tolerant ones. It is the tolerant person who decides who must be tolerated and who should not be tolerated. In other words, a hierarchical and unequal relationship between the tolerant and the tolerated is embedded within the very principle of tolerance. As pointed out earlier, tolerance is not a bad word. It has its uses. For example, one could say that the law would not *tolerate* a murderer or a rapist or anyone who has violated the rights of life and liberty. In cases of violation of the right to life and liberty, it is difficult to defend the normative value of tolerance because when the right to life and liberty is violated, the question of *tolerating* a person who has violated those rights does not arise. However, in cases of Hindu-Muslim relations or any inter-faith relations between various religious communities within the constitutional arrangement in India, *tolerance* becomes an irrelevant concept. Here, I am not offering a sociological argument by pointing out whether there is any empirically provided hierarchical relations between religious majorities and minorities. Rather, as a political **(p.274)** theorist I question whether tolerance is a relevant concept when it is not a part of the conceptual vocabulary of the Indian Constitution.

There is a rich tradition of political philosophy in Western liberal democratic doctrine on the idea of tolerance, particularly John Locke onwards, which supports tolerance as a normative idea.⁸⁵ The liberal democratic approach describes tolerance as a puzzling attitude where 'tolerance requires us to accept people and permit their practices even when we strongly disapprove of them' and thus it involves an attitude which is 'intermediate between wholehearted acceptance and unrestrained opposition'.⁸⁶ In contrast, critical philosophical

literature in the West quite justifiably questions the idea of tolerance. The New Left thinker Herbert Marcuse's critique of 'pure tolerance' and his critical ideas on 'repressive tolerance' point out how tolerance justifies everyday violence of exploitation and promotes the tyranny of the majority.⁸⁷ Similarly, Wendy Brown correctly argues that in the political vocabulary and political rhetoric of our everyday in and around the word, *tolerance* is a result of the significant and continuous reproduction of the discourses of depoliticization. As she incisively maintains:

The retreat from more substantive visions of justice heralded by the promulgation of tolerance today is part of a more general depoliticization of citizenship and power and retreat from political life itself. The cultivation of tolerance as a political end implicitly constitutes a rejection of politics as a domain in which conflict can be productively articulated and addressed, a domain in which citizens can be transformed by their participation.⁸⁸

Thus, Slavoj Žižek passionately argues that the discourse of tolerance is a result of culturalization of politics instead of political struggle as a remedy to resolve the problems of life. According to Žižek:

(p.275) Why are so many problems today perceived as problems of intolerance, not as problems of inequality, exploitation, injustice? Why is the proposed remedy tolerance, not emancipation, political struggle, even armed struggle? The immediate answer is the liberal multiculturalist's basic ideological operation: the culturalization of politics. Political differences, differences conditioned by political inequality, economic exploitation, and so on, are naturalized and neutralized into cultural differences, different ways of life, which are something given, something that cannot be overcome, but must be merely tolerated.⁸⁹

In the last two decades, there has been a robust scholarship about civilizational arguments of tolerance, particularly in the wake of the rise of Hindu nationalism in India. This set of literature essentially justifies the notions of tolerance by invoking various ideas about it in the texts and practices of ancient, medieval, and colonial India. This has been magnificently articulated in the works of Amartya Sen, Rajeev Bhargava, and Sudipta Kaviraj.⁹⁰ Ashis Nandy's placing of religious tolerance outside the ideological domain of Western modernity is indeed a valid argument.⁹¹ Similarly, Partha Chatterjee's well-known critique of the liberal democratic doctrine of the West while calling to take the side of democracy by opting for a strategic politics both within and outside the institutions of the state has merit.⁹² However, **(p.276)** all of them, in effect, either find the idea of tolerance in ancient and medieval history or find examples

in the colonial period about how secularism and toleration might not work due to the governmentality of the modern regimes of power.

In contrast to such a rigorous scholarship on tolerance in the Indian context, as a political theorist I am interested in asking whether the very idea of tolerance is relevant for inter-faith relations or in common parlance for Hindu-Muslim co-existence, at a time when mob lynching and moral policing have become an everyday affair in the country. Today, in India, the constitutional principles are under serious threat. In the last two decades there has been a growing tendency of distorting history along with the creation of myths by the ideologues and activists of the Hindutva brigade which has forced the banning of history textbooks and have put constraints on films and documentaries. Similarly, in the recent past, the minutely present Islamists in India have also resorted to vandalism and have demanded bans on the works of controversial authors. The majoritarian Hindutva groups have been instrumental in creating a political discourse that contests known facts and propagates some vague notions of defining 'Indian civilization'. The India that is Bharat as we know today is very clearly defined in the Indian Constitution by referring to territoriality.⁹³ Those who disagreed with such a territorial vision of India had parted ways in 1947, but the Constitution is for those who had willingly accepted such a vision. The Indian republic within an agreed constitutional framework emerged on 26 January 1950. In that sense, one could say that it is a young republic but with an ancient history of civilizational ethos although marred by contestations about the true essence of such a civilization and conflicts over radically different conceptions about what is known as 'India'.⁹⁴ India is run by a constitutional democracy and the task of the radical democrats would always be to deepen and carry forward the liberal democratic principles. The task of the radical democratic subject would be to produce a counter-discourse of educating people about their constitutional rights. Thus, opposition to the discourse of tolerance in India could be justified on two grounds: (1) It is a discourse (p.277) of depoliticization, and (2) it is an irrelevant concept from the vantage point of constitutional democracy. Since tolerance is not the reference point of the constitutional principles while fundamental rights of the citizens are, can any idea of civilization replace the democratic principles of the Indian Constitution that have been codified by the representatives of the people of India? Thus, the inherent normative values enshrined in the Constitution must be upheld and given precedence over any civilizational values.

Third, in the absence of the left in many states, a radical democratic political project could be articulated by an alliance of several populist regional parties with strong federal tendencies. The two big national parties of India (the Congress and the BJP) have been decisively on the side of big corporate capital and in favour of the neoliberal regime. As pointed out earlier, unless the Congress changes from being neoliberal to liberal by advocating Keynesianism, it would not gain credibility among the people of the country. In such a scenario,

in the next few decades, it will be difficult for the party to attract several regional parties for a united front against the communal-fascist designs of the RSS-backed BJP. It will then have to settle for either short-term pre-poll tactical alliances or post-poll ones, but those would not have any strategic vision of transcending neoliberal capitalism to move into a post-neoliberal order. In the last few years, on many instances such as the issues of land acquisition, special economic zone (SEZ), foreign direct investment (FDI) in retail, federalism, demonetization, and so on, we have noticed how several regional parties have tried to defend the interests of the agrarian population, petty production, the large informal sector labour force, and non-corporate capital. So far, there is no coherent ideological articulation of such a federal alliance of regional parties. However, in recent years, a particular form of centre-left utterance is emerging from the political praxis of several populist regional parties. The federalist project of some regional parties and the left must organize and prepare themselves for a more substantial political coalition for a united people's resistance against the neoliberal regime in India.

Before concluding, let me put forward, briefly, the major arguments of the book. It was pointed out that at least in the last three decades, India has experienced economic reforms often identified as the policies of liberalization, privatization, and globalization with their promise of opening up more opportunities for the people. This book has **(p.278)** tried to investigate whether economic reforms have actually benefited Muslims with adequate socio-economic development in the context of the consistent political allegation of so-called Muslim appeasement by Hindutva forces. However, the actual socio-economic realities facing Indian Muslims are completely different from such propaganda. It has been demonstrated that Indian Muslims are one of the most educationally backward and economically deprived groups such as Dalits and Adivasis as evident from several reports by government-appointed committees, census data, national sample surveys, and academic studies. In view of these empirical studies, there is little evidence to suggest that the period of economic reforms has massively benefited Indian Muslims. In this context, this book has tried to understand why it is that even if Indian Muslims can be empirically identified as a deprived socio-economic group, the issues of socio-economic deprivation of Muslims in India have not been prominently articulated in contemporary political discourses.

This book suggests that there are three principal reasons for such a neglect of the socio-economic aspects of Indian Muslims during the period of economic reforms. First, the problems of Muslims are inadequately understood by the governmental agencies and the political leadership. As a result, the state either ignores the real issues of Muslims or tries to resolve them through a piecemeal approach. Second, the lack of a progressive leadership among the Muslim community in India has traditionally meant that the problems of Indian Muslims have been restricted to the issues of *identity* (for example, the issues of Muslim

personal laws, minority educational institutions, fatwas against controversial authors, so on) and *security* (immunity from communal violence). In effect, the visible conservative leadership among Indian Muslims has not been passionate enough to articulate the demands of *equity* (modern education, health, income, employment, and so on). Third, mainstream popular culture such as Hindi cinema has misrepresented the identity of Indian Muslims by using age-old stereotypes and indulging in vilification without showing the actual problems of Muslim minorities. As a result, only the wrong notions, misconceptions, and myths regarding Muslims proliferate and permeate in large sections of non-Muslims, and the structural problems of the Muslim minorities hardly gets attention for remedy. Finally, I have proposed three routes of radical democratic politics to transform the particularist Muslim (p.279) question to a universalist agenda of reimagining India in the twenty-first century.

The project of left-wing populism of expanding the people's democratic front while articulating the democratic demands of workers, peasants, Dalits, Adivasis, women, and Muslims, the possibilities of a Dalit-Muslim social alliance with the Ambedkarite goal of social democracy, and re-envisioning India with a federalist political outlook with the broader strategic framework of radical democracy are difficult tasks to pursue. It is also possible that the three routes of radical democracy identified here—left-wing populism, Ambedkarite social democracy, and federalist politics—might complement each other while fighting neoliberal orthodoxy. This is because a radical democratic project would be more successful if it expands the horizons of platform politics to accommodate such wide range of social and political forces for a broad rainbow coalition against those political formations that sustain neoliberal capitalism. Therefore, a radical democratic political articulation in India to challenge the neoliberal regime has necessarily to be a collective effort. Let us hope that radical democratic politics of the Indian people along with a robust federalist orientation will be able to achieve such an objective. The success or failure of a radical democratic politics is not just a matter of one or two elections. It is the most important political task for any progressive politics in India to continuously pursue a radical democratic agenda as an alternative to neoliberalism.

Notes:

(*) Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, 'Preface to the Second Edition' of *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (London: Verso, 2001 [1985]), pp. xviii-xix.

(†) Ernesto Laclau, 'Constructing Universality', in *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality: Contemporary Dialogues on the Left*, edited by Judith Butler, Ernesto Laclau and Slavoj Žižek, (London: Verso, 2000), p. 306.

(¹) Luke March, 'Left and Right Populism Compared: The British Case', *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, vol. 19, no. 2 (2017), pp. 282–303.

(²) Chantal Mouffe, 'The "End of Politics" and the Challenge of Right-Wing Populism', in *Populism and the Mirror of Democracy*, edited by Francisco Panizza (London: Verso, 2005), p. 69.

(³) Chantal Mouffe, 'In Defence of Left-Wing Populism', *The Conversation* (30 April 2016), available at <http://theconversation.com/in-defence-of-left-wing-populism-55869>, accessed on 13 April 2018.

(⁴) Ashutosh Varshney, 'India's Watershed Vote: Hindu Nationalism in Power', *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 25, no. 4 (October 2014), pp. 36–7.

(⁵) Karl Marx, 'Theses on Feuerbach', in *Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, Selected Works*, vol. I (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1969), p. 15.

(⁶) Ernesto Laclau, *On Populist Reason* (London: Verso, 2005), p. 86.

(⁷) Laclau, *On Populist Reason*, p. 81.

(⁸) Laclau, *On Populist Reason*, p. 81.

(⁹) Laclau, *On Populist Reason*, p. 86.

(¹⁰) Simon Critchley and Oliver Marchart, 'Introduction', in *Laclau: A Critical Reader*, edited by Simon Critchley and Oliver Marchart (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 2.

(¹¹) Ernesto Laclau, 'Universalism, Particularism and the Question of Identity', in his *Emancipation(s)* (London: Verso, 1996), p. 35.

(¹²) Ernesto Laclau, 'Subject of Politics, Politics of the Subject', in *Emancipation(s)*, p. 65.

(¹³) Laclau, *On Populist Reason*, p. 81.

(¹⁴) For a historical and political analysis of the consolidation of the left and the symptoms of impending crises of the left rule in the three states of Kerala, West Bengal, and Tripura, regarded as the bastions of the parliamentary left in India, see Manali Desai, *State Formation and Radical Democracy in India* (London: Routledge, 2007); Bidyut Chakrabarty, *Left Radicalism in India* (London: Routledge, 2015); Dwaipayan Bhattacharyya, *Government as Practice: Democratic Left in a Transforming India* (New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 2016); Harihar Bhattacharyya, *Radical Politics and Governance in India's North East: The Case of Tripura* (London: Routledge, 2018). In contrast to the above literature, I am proposing a radical democratic politics of the left that is

not an older form of social democratic politics of the twentieth century that the Left Front in the states of Kerala, West Bengal, and Tripura tried to adopt. Rather, my proposal is based on the solid theoretical literature of post-Marxism on the one hand and the politics of left-wing populism of the twenty-first century on the other, which has some successful examples in Europe and Latin America.

(¹⁵) Ernesto Laclau, 'Ideology and Post-Marxism', *Journal of Political Ideologies*, vol. 11, no. 2 (June 2006), p. 112.

(¹⁶) CPI (Maoist) Party Programme, p. 23, 27–9. CPI (Maoist) Central Committee (P) Document, 'Strategy and Tactics of the Indian Revolution' (dated 21 September 2004), pp. 78–80, available at <http://www.bannedthought.net/India/CPI-Maoist-Docs/>.

(¹⁷) The relevance of political violence or the revolutionary violence of the Maoists as a necessary condition for radical, social, and political change is well debated in Ajay Gudavarthy, ed., *Revolutionary Violence versus Democracy: Narratives from India* (New Delhi: Sage, 2017).

(¹⁸) Vijay Prashad, 'The Antinomies of "Maoism"', in *Maoism: A Critique from the Left*, edited by Prasenjit Bose (New Delhi: LeftWord Books, 2010), pp. 70–88.

(¹⁹) Jayati Ghosh, 'The Emerging Left in the "Emerging" World', *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 47, no. 24 (16 June 2012), pp. 33–8.

(²⁰) Yannis Stavrakakis and Giorgos Katsambekis, 'Left-Wing Populism in the European Periphery: The Case of SYRIZA', *Journal of Political Ideologies*, vol. 19, no. 2 (2014), pp. 119–42; Takis S. Pappas, *Populism and Crisis Politics in Greece* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

(²¹) Cas Mudde, *SYRIZA: The Failure of the Populist Promise*, with a foreword by Petros Papasarakantopoulos (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

(²²) Leandro Vergara-Camus and Cristóbal Kay, 'New Agrarian Democracies: The Pink Tide's Lost Opportunity', in *Rethinking Democracy: Socialist Register 2018*, edited by Leo Panitch and Greg Albo (London: Merlin Books, 2017), pp. 224–43.

(²³) For a detailed analysis of the concept of *homo oeconomicus* and its evolution from the eighteenth century and its return under neoliberal conditions, see Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978–79*, edited by Michel Senellart, translated by Graham Burchell (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

(²⁴) Ranabir Samaddar, *Neo-Liberal Strategies of Governing India* (London: Routledge, 2016).

(²⁵) B.R. Ambedkar, 'Ranade, Gandhi and Jinnah' [1943], in *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches*, vol. 1, edited by Vasant Moon (Bombay: Department of Education, Government of Maharashtra, 1979), p. 222.

(²⁶) Ambedkar, 'Ranade, Gandhi and Jinnah' [1943], pp. 222–3.

(²⁷) This was amply enunciated by Ambedkar in riddle number 22 ('Brahma is Not Dharma. What Good Is Brahma?'). See B.R. Ambedkar, 'Riddles in Hinduism: An Exposition to Enlighten the Masses', in *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches*, vol. 4, edited by Vasant Moon (Bombay: Department of Education, Government of Maharashtra, 1987), p. 284.

(²⁸) B.R. Ambedkar, 'Who Were the Shudras? How They Came to Be the Fourth Varna in Indo-Aryan Society' [1946], in *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches*, vol. 7 edited by Vasant Moon (Bombay: Government of Maharashtra, 1990), p. 12.

(²⁹) B.R. Ambedkar, 'What Congress and Gandhi Have Done to the Untouchables' [1946], in *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches*, vol. 9, edited by Vasant Moon (Bombay: Department of Education, Government of Maharashtra, 1991), p. 447.

(³⁰) Ambedkar, 'What Congress and Gandhi Have Done to the Untouchables', p. 447.

(³¹) B.R. Ambedkar, 'Labour and Democracy', in *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches*, vol. 10, edited by Vasant Moon (Bombay: Department of Education, Government of Maharashtra, 1991), pp. 108–9.

(³²) B.R. Ambedkar, 'Third Reading of the Draft Constitution', in *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches*, vol. 13, edited by Vasant Moon (Bombay: Department of Education, Government of Maharashtra, 1994), p. 1216.

(³³) Gopal Guru, 'Limits of the Organic Intellectual: A Gramscian Reading of Ambedkar', in *The Political Philosophies of Antonio Gramsci and B.R. Ambedkar: Itineraries of Dalits and Subalterns*, edited by Cosimo Zene (London: Routledge, 2013), pp. 87–100.

(³⁴) Ananya Vajpeyi, *Righteous Republic: The Political Foundations of Modern India* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2012), p. 209.

(³⁵) Aishwary Kumar, *Radical Equality: Ambedkar, Gandhi, and the Risk of Democracy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015).

(³⁶) I am grateful to Partha Chatterjee for his illuminating talk on 'Ambedkar's Theory of Minority Rights', on 12 July 2017 at the Centre for Studies in Social

Sciences, Calcutta, that helped me to search for the exact sources of Ambedkar's thoughts on minorities.

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(³⁸) Ambedkar, 'States and Minorities', p. 427.

(³⁹) James Massey, *Dr. B.R. Ambedkar: A Study in Just Society* (New Delhi: Manohar and Centre for Dalit/Subaltern Studies, 2003), p. 72.

(⁴⁰) M.S. Gore, *The Social Context of an Ideology: Ambedkar's Political and Social Thought* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1993), p. 343.

(⁴¹) B.R. Ambedkar, 'Thoughts on Linguistic States' [1955], in *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches*, vol. 1, p. 169.

(⁴²) Ambedkar, 'Thoughts on Linguistic States' [1955], pp. 167–8.

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national/tp-karnataka/bjp-opposes-implementation-of-sachar-committee-report/article4779969.ece, accessed on 18 October 2017.

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⁽⁵⁴⁾ Sharma, *Terrifying Vision*, pp. 65–88.

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⁽⁷⁸⁾ Karatani, *Transcritique*, p. 302.

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⁽⁸²⁾ *The Constitution of India* [as on 8th September 2016 with the latest 101st Amendment Act, 2016]. The reference to the articles is from *The Constitution of*

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⁽⁸³⁾ In Part II of the *Constitution of India*, Articles 5–11 clearly define citizenship and determine the scope of citizens regarding their domicile, rights, and the relation between citizenship and domestic law.

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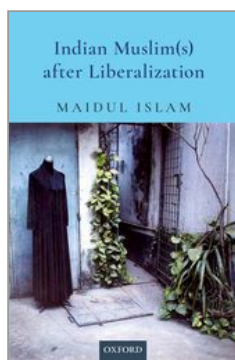
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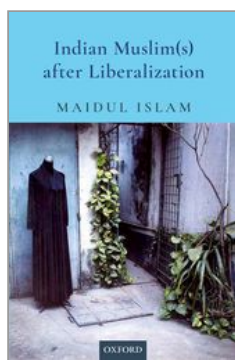
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Maidul Islam

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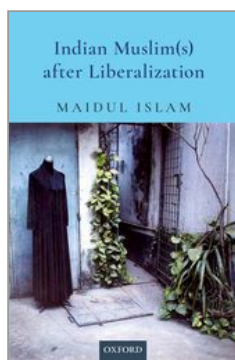
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